

ETHICAL DESIRE: BETRAYAL
IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH FICTION

A Dissertation
by
SOO YEON KIM

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2010

Major Subject: English

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee	David McWhirter
Committee Members	Mary Ann O'Farrell
	Theodore George
	Elizabeth Ho
Head of Department	M. Jimmie Killingsworth

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ABSTRACT

Ethical Desire: Betrayal in Contemporary British Fiction. (May 2010)

Soo Yeon Kim, B.A., Seoul National University;

M.A., Seoul National University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. David McWhirter

This dissertation investigates representations of betrayal in works by Hanif Kureishi, Salman Rushdie, Irvine Welsh, and Alan Hollinghurst. In rethinking “bad” acts of betrayal as embodying an ethical desire not for the good but for “the better,” this dissertation challenges the simplistic good/bad binary as mandated by neo-imperialist, late capitalist, and heteronormative society. In doing so, my project intervenes in the current paradigm of ethical literary criticism, whose focus on the canon and the universal Good gained from it runs a risk of underwriting moral majoritarianism and judgmentalism. I argue that some contemporary narratives of betrayal open up onto a new ethic, insofar as they reveal the *unethical* totalization assumed in ethical literary criticism’s pursuit of the normative Good.

The first full chapter analyzes how Kureishi’s *Intimacy* portrays an ethical adultery as it breaks away from the tenacious authority of monogamy in portraying adult intimacy in literature, what I call the narrative of “coupledom.” Instead, *Intimacy* imagines a new narrative of “singledom” unconstrained by the marriage/adultery dyad. In the next chapter on *Fury*, a novel about Manhattan’s celebrity culture, I interrogate

the current discourse of cosmopolitanism and propose that Rushdie's novel exposes how both cosmopolitanism and nationalism are turned into political commodities by media-frenzied and celebrity-obsessed metropolitan cultural politics. In a world where an ethical choice between cosmopolitanism and nationalism is impossible to make, *Fury* achieves an ethical act of treason against both. The next chapter scrutinizes Mark Renton's "ripping off" of his best mates and his critique of capitalism in *Trainspotting* and *Porno*. If Renton betrays his friends in order to leave the plan(e) of capitalism in the original novel, he satirizes the trustworthiness of trust in *Porno* by crushing his best mate's blind trust in business "ethics" and by ripping him off again. The last full chapter updates the link between aesthetics and ethics in post-AIDS contexts in Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty*. In portraying without judgment beautiful, dark-skinned, dying homosexual bodies, Hollinghurst's novel "fleshes out" the traditional sphere of aesthetics that denies the low and impure pleasures frequently paired with gay sex.

DEDICATION

To My Son

Who Makes Me Laugh and Cry

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Robert: Oh...not much more to say on that subject, really, is there?
 Emma: What do you consider the subject to be?
 Robert: Betrayal.

Harold Pinter, *Betrayal* (1977)

Despite Robert's savvy remark, conveyed in the slightly feigned tone of disinterest, there is no denying the attraction of the theme of betrayal in western literature.

Transhistorically, the theme of betrayal dates back to Greek tragedy and the Bible, constitutes a crucial motif in medieval court literature and the Shakespearean opus, gives birth to fiction, and pervades the modernist novels of James Joyce, Henry James, and many others. Transcending any categorizing principles such as genre, style, and the high art/mass culture distinction, plots of political treason and marital infidelity have been avidly narrated in every venue from serious literary canons and independent films to popular contemporary cultural products, such as novels by Dan Brown, chick lit and lad lit, and Hollywood films. The keen exploration of various forms and meanings of betrayal in numerous texts may well have resulted in a better understanding of the topic. Yet in the words of Leszek Kołakowski, betrayal "excludes the possibility that [it] can be a good thing...it entails disapproval" (72). Judith Shklar wonders why we never lose interest in betrayal for all its "ordinariness and frequency" (138). To the contrary, our responses to being betrayed or witnessing an act of betrayal occur to others are

This dissertation follows the MLA style as specified in *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.

“sharp and intense” (Ibid.), even though who has betrayed whom for what reason is often left unclear and debatable: ergo the title of Shklar’s book chapter, “The Ambiguities of Betrayal.” In either case, betrayal remains a deeply stigmatized behavior, all the more despicable for the fact that we know that it is bad, but we cannot do without it.

This dissertation, then, is an attempt to create a new positive literacy of betrayal by investigating representations of “bad” betrayal in contemporary British fiction: Hanif Kureishi’s *Intimacy* (1998), Salman Rushdie’s *Fury* (2001), Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting* (1993) and its long-awaited sequel, *Porno* (2002), and Alan Hollinghurst’s *The Line of Beauty* (2004). By redeeming the value of betrayal, I do not mean to justify apologetically the use of betrayal as a narrational necessity, which provides the novel an antithesis to be overcome on its way to a happy ending. Nor does this dissertation wish to argue the universal goodness of perfidy portrayed in any novel. Rather, I am interested in the ways that acts of betrayal call into question the simplistic binary division between good and bad stipulated by late capitalist, neo-imperialist, and heteronormative society. In other words, by shifting focus from the Good—the ultimatum of moral philosophy—to morally branded desires triggering betrayal, my dissertation illuminates a space of irony in which a breach of trust or allegiance reveals the *unethical* totalization of normative or consensual ethics, what Alain Badiou condemns as “ethical ideologies” (2001; 58). In this space lies a new ethical possibility opened up by betrayal. I call this treacherous yet transvaluating desire an “ethical desire” for its continuous crossing over boundaries in search of the “better” beyond good

and evil. Accordingly, my dissertation intervenes in the current paradigm of ethical literary criticism, whose focus on the canon and the general Good gained from it runs a risk of underwriting moral majoritarianism and judgmentalism. What follows outlines the development of ethical literary criticism. In adding the value of “wicked” betrayal to the realm of ethics, I hope to enlarge the discourse of ethical literary criticism which, constrained by the good and bad bifurcation, cannot fully comprehend the popularity and significance of post-1945 narratives of betrayal in Britain.

Ethical Literary Criticism and Its Discontents

The intersecting histories of moral philosophy and literature trace back to Aristotle’s *Poetics* and *The Nicomachean Ethics*, in which Aristotle elucidates that poetry’s task is to enhance virtue and happiness, *arete* and *eudaimonia* in Greek, through an art of imitation. Considering that the etymologies of the two Greek words entail joy, well-being, goodness, justice, and nobility, it can be argued that Aristotle sets the scene for ethical literary criticism centered upon the notions of goodness, justice, and virtue.

While Aristotle’s dictum, “happiness results from virtue” (*NE* 12), has been instrumental to establishing the role of literature as mimicking “the complete goodness” (*NE* 8) and as *serving* moral philosophy, I follow Robert Eaglestone’s claim that “criticism is a recent invention” (1997; 10). According to Eaglestone, literary criticism arose as an autonomous discourse, independent of history and theology, only after the onset of modernity and the death of God in the nineteenth century. Invested in modernist humanism, the modern literary critic sought for a “disinterested” interpretation of “the

canon” through which to divulge its serious “moral purpose” (18). Matthew Arnold’s *Essays in Criticism* (1865, 1888), T. S. Eliot’s “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919), and F. R. Leavis’ *The Great Tradition* (1948) would aptly testify to this critical methodology. Modern criticism’s preoccupation with morality, however, was inseparable from “Anglo-American criticism’s...deployment of nationalist, imperialist, institutional and pedagogical power” (10). The elitism of modern humanists began to be challenged in the post-1945 era by new radical theories such as neo-Marxism and poststructuralism, oftentimes lumped together under the umbrella term “postmodernism,” until the resurgence of literature *as* moral philosophy took place in the early 1980s.¹ Since the eighties, hundreds of publications have appeared under the headings of “ethics,” “literature,” and “criticism.”² A majority of these books’ authors proclaim a return to modern humanism and are hence dubbed “neo-humanists.” Tobin Siebers’ and Patrick Grant’s following remarks exemplify neo-humanist beliefs: “The finally human is literature” (Siebers 13); “great books tell us how to live” (Grant 221). Acclaimed critics in this field, Wayne C. Booth, Martha Nussbaum, and Richard Rorty, to name just a few, advocate an “evaluative” goal of literary criticism and reaffirm the “moral insight” and the “ethical unconscious” (Parker 4) of literary “classics.” Modeled after the “practices, the virtues, and tradition” of the criticism of Aristotle, Dr. Johnson, Matthew Arnold, F. R. Leavis, and Lionel Trilling, ethical literary criticism circa the eighties espouses the “various religious and humanistic traditions we stand in abiding need of and are poorer without” (Parker 3).

In the context of postwar British society, the emergence of neo-humanist criticism in the 1980s can be understood as a reaction to Thatcherism as well as an effort to continue the “culture of consensus” (Sinfield 2000; 83), which had stood for the “inclusive social ethos” of welfare capitalism and the notion of the “‘good’ culture” (89) prevalent in postwar Britain till the end of the 1970s. In *The Thatcher Effect*, Bryan Appleyard argues that the founding of the Arts Council in 1945 effectively replaced private patrons with a national patron without altering an “essentially nineteenth-century view of art as a relatively stable and recognizable commodity with definable social benefits” (309). This view, Appleyard notes, was also supported by the mainstream of academic thinking exemplified by the “development of Cambridge English teaching inspired by F. R. Leavis’ insistence on moral rigour and the centrality of a single tradition” (Ibid.). The dismantling of the “good” culture in the Thatcherite era took various forms, but for Alan Sinfield, the “collapse of [universal] literature and consensus” (99) was hugely indebted to an “alternative ideology, which became dominant in the 1980s and which in Britain we call ‘Thatcherism’ and ‘the New Right’”: “the market” (92). If the “good” culture—represented by the “transcendent, universal claims of literature”—was sustained by privileged subsidies and rested on the very belief that “it is above mundane cash consideration” (99), Thatcher’s rearrangement of the sphere of art within the principle of the market turned culture into a consumer-oriented industry, thus destroying the coherence and centrality of a “good” culture and literature as high art. The collapse of the culture of consensus has double-edged meanings: it brought to light the dissenting voices of postcolonial and post-sexual liberation society

and, at the same time, reintegrated such voices to the laws of consumer capitalism. This twofold significance of Thatcherism and its impact on art is discussed again in this introduction and in chapter V of the dissertation. Suffice it to say here that the neo-humanist focus on such terms as “evaluation,” “classics,” and the “ethical unconscious” overlooks the particularity of a single literary work deriving from its political and commercial aspect. In other words, ethical literary criticism neglects to account for the ideological nature of literature *as* “cultural capital,” John Guillory’s term/book title that designates the symbolic status a cultural product occupies in the market. Similarly, neo-humanists’ privileging of a coherent moral subject is unable to explain a post-humanistic landscape portrayed by contemporary writers. It is necessary to recognize the ethical literary critic’s effort to reclaim the perennial and unified value of literature in defiance of the relativistic approach of cultural studies circa the 1980s. But the post-humanist subject resists a central and lasting identity. Instead, it consists of the variables of minority belongings, such as “a woman,” “a Muslim,” “a european [sic],” “a lesbian,” and “a black,” all of which “intersect, coincide or clash [but are] seldom synchronized” (Braidotti 94).

The exigency to break free from the humanist ideals of goodness, virtue, and justice to the seemingly immoral desires and selfish behaviors embodied in betrayal presents itself in the current stalemate in philosophical ethics as well. Today’s ethical discourse can be divided into three strands: the neo-Aristotelian and neo-humanist moral philosophy that has ruled Anglophone ethical literary criticism, discussed in the previous paragraphs; the ultra-theoretical mode of ethics rooted in Emmanuel Lévinas’ influential

concept of the Other; and ethical ideologies intent on propagating the consensual Good in the service of State-institutions, such as bio-ethics and business ethics. Alasdair MacIntyre's work serves as a prime example of the first mode of ethics. In his prologue to the third edition of *After Virtue*, MacIntyre reasserts the importance of communal goodness, noting that "the best type of human life, in which the tradition of the virtues is most adequately embodied, is lived by those engaged in constructing and sustaining forms of community directed towards the shared achievement of those common goods without which the ultimate human good cannot be achieved" (xiv). While the meanings of "the best type of human life" and "the ultimate human good" remain abstruse, MacIntyre's work, like many other studies of moral philosophy, is exclusively dedicated to the Aristotelian tripod that interlocks goodness, happiness, and virtue. Colin McGinn's monograph showcases an uncommon example of contemplating evil from a moral philosophy's viewpoint. In *Ethics, Evil, and Fiction*, McGinn regrets that "the virtual absence of this subject [evil] from current moral philosophy should alert us to its parochiality" (4). McGinn's slim book on evil, however, aims at finding out "what might be done to *remedy* it" (my italics 4). To borrow the words of Terry Eagleton, "evil" and "bad men" are "anti-theoretical terms" because "they are invitations to shut down thought" (2003; 223). For me, moral philosophers' view of evil as a disease to be remedied and their collective dismissal of betrayal as "simple wickedness" align them with "sturdy moralists" rather than with ethicists (Shklar 189).

The second mode of ethics, centered in Lévinas' thinking, has gone through a critical rollercoaster. It hardly needs saying that a Lévinasian ethics of saying offers a

break from the Anglo-American moralism of reading and diversifies the ethical literary criticism of the 1990s.³ If “the said” means the fixed, the re-presented, and the conquered, Eaglestone observes, “the saying enigmatically and diachronically signifies transcendence or the Infinite, the otherwise than being and the disinterestedness from essence” (1997; 154). In short, the saying is ethical for its openness to “other” significations. Not concerned with fixing the model of virtuous conduct that would guarantee the self an Aristotelian good and happy life, Lévinasian ethics puts an end to ethics as a system of moral categories. Instead, Lévinas bestows a prerogative upon the Other, whose alterity is as ungraspable as death and *Eros*, and to whom the self owes an infinite responsibility. In this sense, Lévinas can be seen as a discursive father of the ethical desire that relinquishes moral platitudes and espouses “other” desires in rivalry with the social Law. Yet, while Lévinas’ ethic of alterity has revolutionized methodologies of feminist, postcolonial, and literary studies, an increasing number of critics complain about the “oppressively homogenizing” dimension of the Lévinasian Other (Buell 16) and the “paralyzing impossibility” of an ethics subjugated to the inaccessible Other (Hallward xxxvi). Tellingly, Simon Critchley points out that in a volume entitled *Contemporary French Philosophy*, published in 1979, there is absolutely no mention of Lévinas. Despite the fact that Lévinas is responsible for making ethics “the most charged term in contemporary theory” (88), Critchley remains uncertain whether the sudden canonization of his work in less than two decades “will result in expansion, explosion or slow flatulence” (89). In *The Transparency of Evil*, Jean Baudrillard laments that we are obsessed with “an orgy of discovery, exploration, and

‘invention’ of the Other” (124). Fallen under the law of the market, Baudrillard argues, the Other is “no longer there to be exterminated, hated, rejected or seduced, but instead to be understood, liberated, coddled, recognized” (125). That is to say, the Other has become a rare and novel item, somewhat “different” yet still staying within the Same. What remains to be achieved, therefore, is not to reject the Lévinasian ethics per se but to stop the domestication of the Other.

The third mode of ethics does not deserve the title of ethics. In the words of Badiou, ethical ideologies are an accomplice to the domination of the status quo, and merely show a “genuine nihilism” and a “threatening denial of thought” (2001; 3). Disseminated by late capitalism’s imperative of Consume! and Enjoy!, ethical ideologies inculcate what Alenka Zupančič calls “bio-morality,” whose axiomatic dictates that “a person who feels good (and is happy) is a good person; a person who feels bad is a bad person” (2008; 5). Even though this axiom bears a striking resemblance to Aristotle’s moral credo, “The happy person lives well and does well” (*NE* 10), bio-morality has little to do with Aristotelian *eudaimonia*. Maintained by the daily consumption of mind-numbing entertainments, from Starbucks to high-end fashion brands to Hollywood comedies, and fortified by what is now officially called “Happiness Studies,”⁴ bio-morality works like Foucauldian biopower and plays a fundamental role in regulating the members of society. Bio-morality and ethical ideologies stunt the development of critical minds by feeding us a simplistic and roseate view of the world and by imposing inane happiness upon us. As a superb example of ethical ideologies, business “ethics” commands total trust between the producer and the consumer for a pleasant business, but

what it conceals beneath the trustworthiness of trust is that such blind trust facilitates the global capitalist's exploitation disguised as "friendly" exchange. Ethical ideologies embodied in late capitalism's prescriptions for happiness are amply traced in the novels I examine in this dissertation. These novels' often hilarious representations of ethical ideologies rampant in contemporary society urge the reader to be vigilant of what lies behind the distinction between happiness and unhappiness, and good and bad—who benefits from such convenient opposition—rather than to struggle to be good and happy with little understanding of why.

Although this dissertation tackles moral ideologies presuming the strict bifurcation and hierarchization between good and bad, my project has little interest in the wholesale condemnation of morality as such. In the same way I do not glorify *all* acts of betrayal in literature as rebellious and ethical, I do not consider any attempt to find moral meanings in literary work to be conducive to "wrong" moral judgment. Anglophone ethical literary criticism as a whole, whether it employs the type of moral philosophy promoted by Nussbaum and Cora Diamond, or the deconstructionist reading elaborated by J. Hillis Miller and Adam Zachary Newton, has definitely enriched our perspectives on literature by violating the "academic norms of objectivity" (Booth 3) and by arguing emphatically for the varied value of reading fiction. Ian McEwan's view on the novel and its moral function provides a fitting example of a morality that is not confined to judgmentalism and didacticism but that is expansive of readers' "sensibilities." In an interview discussing his novel, *Atonement* (2001), McEwan replies to the question of what he believes to be "the purpose of the novel" as follows:

I think, of all literary forms, and perhaps of all artistic forms, it [the novel] is the most adept at showing us what it is like to be someone else....Within one novel you can live inside many different people's heads, in a way that you of course cannot do in normal life. I think that quality of penetration into other consciousnesses lies at the heart of its moral quest. Knowing, or sensing what it's like to be someone else I think is at the foundations of morality. I don't think the novel is particularly good or interesting when it instructs us how to live, so I don't think of it as moral in that sense. But certainly when it shows us intimately, from the inside, other people, it then does extend our sensibilities.

What I am wary of, then, is the misleading notion of morality elevated to the pedestal of the supreme Good by the politically, culturally, and economically powerful. Indeed, when morality turns into neo-imperialist society's weapon to justify its multifarious exploitations, morality denotes no more than an icon of the Good "in the service of goods" (Lacan 1997; 303). Similarly, some ethical literary critics' favoritism towards a limited number of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century novelists may perpetuate a nostalgia for literary canons, intimating that contemporary fiction has little to offer in terms of ethical revelation.⁵ Such unquestionably "good" concepts as justice, loyalty, and fidelity tend to be easily appropriated by abusive causes and to harden into moral absolutes and ethical ideologies. An iconoclast of moral purism, my dissertation highlights the spirit of transformation symbolized in transgressive acts of betrayal. Some betrayals as pictured in contemporary British fiction are ethical inasmuch as they constantly move away from the stagnant norm to the search of the "better." Although what Lee Edelman wants to call the "better"—the Lacanian truth accessed through queerness—cannot be further from "happiness" or "the good" (2004; 5), Edelman

cogently argues that such truth is still better than normative goodness for its moving towards the Real.

Just as Edelman's notion of the better "promises absolutely nothing" (Ibid.), the acts of betrayal examined in this dissertation—adultery, treason, theft, and death—by no means lead to a good and happy life; they often, in fact, result in exile or infamy. These "bad" acts and their dismal consequences are nonetheless "better," for they uncover the ways that our epistemological, ethical, and libidinal desires are at odds with normative goodness. For me, Rorty's term, "philosophical pluralism," exemplifies a type of the normative Good. Rorty elucidates that the reason to use "persuasion rather than force, to do our best to come to terms with people whose convictions are archaic and ingenerate, is simply that using force, or mockery, or insult, is likely to decrease human happiness" (276). Along with these words, Rorty's observation that "there are lots of people [and cultures] we would be better off without" (Ibid.) sounds condescending to me, as if he is tolerant of different peoples solely for the sake of the greatest-happiness-for-the-greatest-number-of-people doctrine. An ethic of betrayal that I intend to build in this dissertation has little bearing on the utilitarian happiness and pluralist tolerance championed by Rorty. In contrast, my ethic of betrayal embodies what Judith Butler calls "a different conception of ethics" (2003; 208). In "Values of Difficulty," Butler argues that a different concept of ethics emerges when we, the readers of the novel, encounter what is "strange, isolating, [and] demanding" in the novel and when we "cease judging, paradoxically, in the name of ethics, cease judging in a way that assumes we already know in advance what there is to be known" (Ibid.). By honoring "what cannot

be fully known or captured about the Other,” Butler explains, the reader experiences “the anxiety and the promise of what is different, what is possible, what is waiting for us if we do not foreclose it in advance” (208-9). In the same manner, this dissertation creates a different kind of ethical-critical field that asks the reader to interpret deception and unfaithfulness without exacting an “epistemic violence” (Spivak 1988; 280) on them. An ethic of betrayal comes into being precisely at the moment we shake up the old bond between ethics and pure goodness that often amounts to spurious moral ideologies.

To summarize Butler’s argument in Mark Sanders’ words, “Literature is an other-maker” (4). There is little doubt that the novel has been in the forefront in generating Others—especially in the forms of “bad” figures such as outlaws, liars, adulterers, traitors, and secret-holders—who challenge society with their “novel” yet thought-provoking actions and ideas. While the novel has been a receptacle of bourgeois sensibility, Victorian morality, and modernist credo, it has accomplished its agendas by continually confronting and incorporating new ideas and forms, the limitless freedom Henry James reveres as “the magnificence of the form” and the “splendid privilege” (21) of the novel. Along the same line, Mikhail Bakhtin argues: “The novel, after all, has no canon of its own. It is, by its very nature, not canonic. It is plasticity itself. It is a genre that is ever questing, ever examining itself, and subjecting its established forms to review” (60). In short, the betrayal of given thoughts and forms is the nature of the novel, an inherently ethical genre that has survived by pushing and revising the borders of the permissible. As Sanders notes, it is “natural” for the novel to “turn to ethics” (4). Pointedly, a turn to ethics has become a ubiquitous phenomenon

across academic disciplines in the last two decades. Among innumerable examples, the recent resuscitation of ethics in discursive sites as diverse as aesthetic theory, studies of globalization, and the thinking of Jacques Derrida is noteworthy.⁶ Lawrence Buell's prediction in 1999 that ethics is soon to become "the paradigm-defining concept that textuality was for the 1970s and historicism for the 1980s" (7) has come true. *The Turn to Ethics*, a volume edited by Marjorie Garber and Rebecca Walkowitz and published in 2000, collects essays written by literary scholars, philosophers, and postcolonial theorists, thus demonstrating the interdisciplinarity of literary studies "going ethical."

Supposing that contemporary fiction fulfills the nature of the genre and continues to engender "Other" characters, why are there so few studies of contemporary fiction in the light of ethics?⁷ For all the crisscrossing of disciplines and genres, literary periodization and geographical perimeters of literary criticism, contemporary British fiction has been oddly excluded from the field of ethical literary criticism except for rare cases. Symptomatic of such paucity of interest in contemporary fiction, Dorothy Hale's 2009 article, "Aesthetics and the New Ethics: Theorizing the Novel in the Twenty-First Century," does not discuss any novelists more recent than Henry James and Henry Miller. While I have no opposition to the literary scholars who work through the same issue in relation to their fields of expertise, the near-complete absence of scholarly work combining contemporary fiction, the theme of betrayal, and ethics duly causes me to wonder about the contemporary world and its literature. That is, what aspect of contemporary society makes its literary betrayers unredeemable and unworthy of contemplation in the eyes of critics? Likewise, as opposed to the flood of monographs

on ethical literary criticism, comprehensive studies of betrayal have been few despite the theme's ubiquity in literature.⁸ As my dissertation endeavors to answer these questions, an ethic of contemporary "bad" fiction in Britain, characterized by its use of the trope of betrayal as an ethical strategy challenging contemporary society, will unfold.

Post-Moral Criticism and Contemporary British Fiction

In their introduction to *Bad Modernisms*, Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz argue that "the idea that there might be something good about bad artistic behavior" (2) is nothing new—although, according to them, modernist art was the baddest of all. Mao and Walkowitz critique prior attempts to discover "the sheer good" in the "domestication of the once-bad" (5) modernisms, the position adopted by Lionel Trilling, Harry Levin, and Andreas Huyssen among others. I am inspired by Mao and Walkowitz' saucy and astute rethinking of modernism, but their polarization between the "special allure" of modernism's "very negatives" and the current "anti-intellectualism [situated upon] the mantle of the good" (16) appears to reinforce the good and bad dyad in assessing art. My contention is that in contemporary society, the vast domain called culture is largely determined by the global market and that there remains no "outside" or "beyond" consumer capitalism, no location for a counterculture once reserved for "bad" art. To put it differently, today's dissolution of old categories between mainstream and counterculture, western and eastern, high art and mass culture, and global and local—what we might call the Deleuzian deterritorialization of culture—is rapidly followed by the assimilation (reterritorialization) of tremendous cultural pluralities into a

standardized and commodified global culture. This seemingly democratized form of global culture, which Fredric Jameson calls the “world culture” led by the American market, thinly masks America’s neo-imperialist agenda whereby heterogeneous cultures worldwide are revamped into appealing “American” commodities. While the American empire of world culture as superlatively depicted by Rushdie is examined in depth in chapter III of this dissertation, Rushdie’s ambivalent attitudes toward this postmodern Empire, his aversion to and fascination with it in equal measure, raise a question as to the ethical role of contemporary writers. To rephrase, when the distinction between a “serious writer” and a “tabloid celebrity” (Kumar 35) is no longer viable, and when literary celebrities are condemned as sellouts to consumer capitalism, how can they accomplish an ethical act? Where the norm of instant happiness rules “the liquid-modern culture of waste” (Bauman 211), the ethical value of contemporary fiction cannot be found within the trajectory of ethical literary criticism preoccupied with goodness and happiness.

A post-moral criticism that I propose in this dissertation shifts attention to all that would constitute “the Other” side of conventional morality, to any treacherous desires that can disrupt the ideal of “the One” Plato declares to be the essence of truth, truth’s unification of the beautiful, the good, and the just. Since the “post-” suffix can signify both the continuance of and a break away from what it modifies, post-moral criticism pushes forward a new moral thinking free from judgmentalism and opens up onto a new deconstructionist ethics. This mode of ethical inquiry, indifferent to pinning down the value of literary texts as good or bad and glorifying their goodness and belittling their

badness, takes issue with the division of good and bad per se and exposes the constructedness of moral values as mandated by society. To borrow Baudrillard's words, post-moral criticism highlights "an intelligence of Evil" in rethinking ethical literary criticism in an age of despotic goodness. Baudrillard convincingly argues that contemporary society has reached the point where the "possibility of evoking Evil does not exist and every last trace of negativity is smothered by the virtual consensus that prevails" (82):

We can no longer speak Evil. All we can do is discourse on the rights of man – a discourse which is pious, weak, useless and hypocritical, its supposed value deriving from the Enlightenment belief in a natural attraction of the Good, from an idealized view of human relationship. What is more, even this Good *qua* ideal value is invariably deployed in a self-defensive, austerity-loving, negative and reactive mode. All the talk is of the minimizing of Evil, the prevention of violence: nothing but *security*. This is the condescending and depressive power of good intentions, a power that can dream of nothing except rectitude in the world, that refuses even to consider a bending of Evil, or an intelligence of Evil. (original italics 85-86)

In addition to Butler's arguments discussed earlier, Baudrillard's updated endorsement of Evil provides another underpinning of a post-moral apparatus and contributes to illuminating the ethical potentials of contemporary fiction. In the following close-reading chapters, I focus on a conversation between poststructuralist ethics and queer theory for a major theoretical frame, drawing eclectically on works by Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Leo Bersani, Adam Phillips, Slavoj Žižek, Alenka Zupančič, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Michel Foucault, Lauren Berlant, Lee Edelman, and Judith Halberstam. For me, the core of what can be broadly construed as poststructuralist ethics lies in its strong emphasis on desire and its challenge to what Michael Hardt and

Antonio Negri call the “moral police” (37) of today’s globalized world. Hardt and Negri argue that the Empire, the postmodern global sovereignty turning up in the third millennium, resorts to ethical ideologies, such as international laws and human rights, in order to justify a moral intervention that often leads to “just wars” (Ibid.). According to Hardt and Negri, it is the Deleuzean nomad’s “desire” to evacuate the locus of the Empire that sets off an ethical rebellion against the Empire. In *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan indicates that the field of moral philosophy as mapped out by Aristotle leaves out “a whole register of desire” (5). In contrast, the ethics conceived by Continental poststructuralists offers a “discourse about forces, desires and values” (Braidotti 14) superseding the “abstract universalism” (15) of moral philosophy. The plots of betrayal I delve into in this dissertation embody many of the ethical imperatives of these thinkers implied in such terms as Lacan’s *jouissance* and the death drive, Derrida’s laws of hospitality which transforms the host into a hostage, Bersani and Phillips’ impersonal intimacies, Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomatic desire, Zupančič’s comedy of the Real, and Foucault’s ethic of pleasure. In entailing the betrayal of the social Law shielded by consensual goodness, these imperatives show that poststructuralist ethics *is* an ethic of betrayal.

A number of queer theorists’ thinking underscored in this dissertation can be viewed as a compelling manifestation of poststructuralist ethics. This is because, in their attempts to reconceptualize gay lifestyles—an object of derision in heteronormative society—as a queer ethic, these queer theorists resist consensual goodness and their work felicitously embodies an ethic of betrayal. In his then-controversial and now-

classic essay, “Is the Rectum a Grave?” Bersani scathingly criticizes the moral fury directed at “AIDS-spreading” gays and celebrates gay men’s obsession with anal sex for its potential to destroy “the masculine idea of proud subjectivity” (221). In *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*, Michael Warner refashions Bersani’s “antisocial thesis in queer theory”⁹ and argues for “a queer ethic” in which “the most heterogeneous people are brought into great intimacy by their common experience of being despised and rejected in a world of norms that they now recognize as false morality” (36). If Bersani’s argument for the desubjectivation assumed in gay sex reimagines a queer ontology *without* subjectivity, Halberstam and Edelman propose a queer epistemology that *negates* knowledge and truth, the normative notion of knowledge as “common sense” and of truth as “a common good,” respectively. In an upcoming book on the politics of knowledge formation, Halberstam critiques the “logic of the binary formulation that damns certain modes of knowing to the realms of negation, absence, and passivity and elevates others to the status of common sense” (2006; 823). In place of the totalizing concept of knowledge, Halberstam zeroes in on the “counterintuitive and patently queer forms of negative knowing,” such as lying and forgetting, through which it might be possible to create a different manner of learning and knowing (Ibid.). Likewise, Edelman’s theory of “queer negativity” (2004; 6) obtains its ethical value precisely insofar as it severs the adamant link between truth and general goodness.

Truth, like queerness, irreducibly linked to the “aberrant or atypical,” to what chafes against “normalization,” finds its value not in a good susceptible to generalization, but only in the stubborn particularity that voids every notion of a general good. The embrace of queer negativity,

then, can have no justification if justification requires it to reinforce some positive social value; its value, instead, resides in its radical challenge to value as defined by the social, and thus in its radical challenge to the very value of the social itself. (6)

In other words, not only does truth have nothing to do with engendering goodness, but the value of truth springs from the very renunciation of truth's old association with a general good. This "queer" understanding of truth dissociated from moralism shores up an ethic of queerness, whose ethical value comes from the persistent problematization—"queering"—of the social. A queer ethics, due to the fact that it is predicated upon the desire to betray the status quo, presents an ethic of betrayal that echoes poststructuralist ethics.

Narratives of betrayal in contemporary British fiction offer an opportune site to explore the ways in which various acts of betrayal work to reveal ethical ideologies and to undertake an ethical rebellion against late capitalism's boosting up of mindless happiness and goodness. That is, betrayal as represented in contemporary fiction makes room for a new ethical thinking by "queering" the ethos of consumer capitalism. My periodization of contemporary fiction in Britain begins with the rise of Margaret Thatcher to Prime Minister in 1979 and the inception of the New Right revolution against the old welfare state which, in turn, radically transformed the way the novel was produced, promoted, consumed, and interpreted.¹⁰ Notwithstanding, it is worth noting that the theme of betrayal has been immensely popular in postwar British narrative and that plots revolving around the "bad" Other abound in postwar novels written in the post-colonial, post-national, post-industrial, and/or post-feminist and gay liberation contexts. In these novels, betrayal functions as a superb metaphor for dissenting desires

and reflects the drastic changes postwar British society underwent, well illustrated by such phrases as the “Finest Hour” during the war (Winston Churchill), London’s “Affluent Society” circa the 1950s, the “Angry Young Man” and the “Swinging London” of the 1960s, and the “Winter of Discontent” in the late 1970s. Examples of the novel thematizing betrayal, Angry Young Man fictions such as John Braine’s *Room at the Top* (1957) and Alan Sillitoe’s *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958), narrate young working-class dissidents’ affairs with married women; in novels by Doris Lessing, Iris Murdoch, and Anita Brookner, adultery is used as a critique of institutional marriage; Timothy Mo’s *Sour Sweet* (1982), Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* (1988), and Kureishi’s *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), all of which are set in multicultural London and former colonies including Hong Kong and India, depict acts of treason and disloyalty in order to destabilize the rigid categorization of racial, religious, and sexual identities founded upon the dated imperial notions of race, class, and gender.

The use of betrayal in postwar British narrative, however, demonstrates a shift in agenda between the pre-Thatcherite and the (post-)Thatcherite period. On the one hand, novels such as Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) and Anthony Burgess’ *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) are known for their explicit delineation of homoeroticism and of ultra-violence that betrays the moral dogma of their times, but nonetheless conclude on a highly moralistic note.¹¹ On the other, in Jeanette Winterson’s *Written on the Body* (1994), the novel’s unsexed narrator completely rescinds the marriage/adultery dyad, in which the former is considered the norm and the latter is labeled the contemptible Other, and avows the essentiality and superiority of desire. These novels evince that the

purpose of employing plots of betrayal has changed from the reaffirmation of morality to the contradiction of moral ideologies. This change of attitude towards conventional moral values is best expressed in the following words of two adulterers. If Julia Flyte seeks moral redemption at the end of her illicit liaison with Charles Ryder in Waugh's novel, saying that "the worse I am, the more I need God" (340), the narrator of Winterson's novel invalidates the marital Law and calls marriage the "flimsiest weapon against desire" (78). The ways in which postwar fiction narrates and resolves the clash between aristocratic, orthodox, racialized, and gender-biased moral creeds and the ethical desire to debunk them go through a severe transformation with the advent of Thatcherism. Despite the myriad postwar narratives of betrayal in Britain until the 1980s, I argue that it is in the contemporary novel published since the 1990s, whose description of post-Thatcher society bears witness to the entirely renovated realm of art as an entrepreneurial industry on the international level, that the trope of betrayal comes to signal the loss of countercultural potentials *and* becomes a new novelistic strategy putting the ethos of late capitalism at bay.

Earlier in this introduction, I mention the dismantling of "good" culture and the reorganization of culture under the rubric of the market beginning in the 1980s. According to Appleyard, the "functional" and "entrepreneurial" role of the Arts Council came to be deemed "commonplace" and appropriate even for those belonging to the hard Left in the arts by the late eighties, who could not create anything without corporate sponsorship anyway (307). With the aim of catering to the needs of a mass audience, postmodern architecture claimed a return to decorative form, and the difficult work of

realism, socialism, and modernism was replaced by an effervescent youth culture evolving since the sixties. Although British publishing houses were not the exception to the rule of postmodern consumerism, in the field of publishing, unlike in architecture and youth culture, “difficult” works were in vogue. Appleyard explains that this vogue was able to happen, because multinational corporations sponsored publishing houses and demanded they publish novels focused more on “cosmopolitan experiment than parochial realism” for the target audience of “newly affluent young middle classes” (311). As the sponsor’s encouragement of “more expansive” and “more experimental” fiction was met by the international success of a new generation of writers, notably Salman Rushdie, Martin Amis, and Julian Barnes, the sales of what would once have been classified as “difficult” novels were “unprecedentedly high” (Ibid.). The vogue of difficult novels announced that the realm of high art, including serious literature, had become subject to the market. Appleyard does not fail to indicate two other major factors in eighties’ publishing, each of which was fundamental to the breakthrough of book marketing and to the revitalization of book retailing: the sudden authority of the Man Booker prize and the establishment of Waterstone’s (book retail chain) in 1982. From a positivist view, Thatcherism’s influence on art kindled new energies in art. By requesting that art, like every other field, must shed “the obsessions of Little England” (314) and the old protectionism, Thatcherism was instrumental in producing internationally acclaimed and commercially successful artworks befitting the Thatcher government’s economic internationalism. With neither sarcasm nor blind celebration, Appleyard concludes that “politics and art have advanced along broadly similar paths”

(314), admitting that his view would mar “the fashionably ‘dissident’ view of art” (Ibid.) and would “horrify” most of the artists who worked during that era. Appleyard’s insight, albeit an unappealing one, brings us back to my previous point that there remains no “beyond” or “outside” the social system where the contemporary author exists independent of the intrusion of the market. Oftentimes, such “intrusion” is all that matters to determining the value of the novel.

The vivid painting of the money-mad, celebrity-obsessed, and flashily exhilarating society of (post-)Thatcherite Britain—and the thorough analysis of the overstimulation and boredom such society yields—constitutes the common material of the novels to be discussed in the following chapters. Among the contemporary novels that both acknowledge their complicities with the system *and* conceive new forms of ethical rebellion against it within the gripping narratives of betrayal, this dissertation chooses particularly notorious cases of adultery in Kureishi’s *Intimacy*, treason in Rushdie’s *Fury*, theft and betrayal of friendship in Welsh’s *Trainspotting* and *Porno*, and death in Hollinghurst’s *The Line of Beauty*. Tellingly, most of these novels have received a hostile reception. In reviewers’ words, *Intimacy*’s “callousness verges on the psychotic” (qtd. in Proctor 39), and Rushdie’s *Fury* is “signifying nothing” (anonymous; D. Mendelsohn; Patterson and Valby). While commentators applaud the “glorious high style” (Tonkin 2004) of *The Line of Beauty*, they dismiss Hollinghurst’s graphic description of gay sex as “boring,” a new way of saying “disgusting” (Bearn). Yet, the unanimous condemnation that these novels vex readers’ moral sense with their abandonment of family, fatherland, friends, and lovers indicates the challenges they pose

to the “cultivated normalization of human thought and experience” (Goodchild 2002; 8). No small number of critics and reviewers opine that these novels are all the more “bad” because of the celebrity status of their authors. If Kureishi and Welsh represented the “bad boy literature” of England and Scotland in the late eighties and the early nineties, both of them are now considered to have “outgrown” the phase of postcolonialism and counterculture, and to have assimilated to the mainstream; both of them live comfortably with much younger women in transatlantic metropolises. Rushdie’s exciting personal life as a global celebrity has provoked heated criticism. *Fury*, his semi-autobiographical novel, has led critics to diagnose him as “a writer in terminal decline” (Wood 2001). Rather, I argue that these writers’ seeming assimilations are at once a symptom of the current Empire of world culture foreclosing countercultural possibilities *and* the driving force for them to invent new novelistic forms that defy the moral Law predicating contemporary lives. If an upfront attack against society is no longer plausible, these novels use tropes of betrayal to undermine its moral underpinnings by rattling, being suspicious of, poking fun at, and sabotaging all that upholds its grand moral causes, such as family values, cosmopolitan liberty, and trust and friendship.

The first full chapter analyzes how Kureishi’s novel portrays an ethical adultery as it breaks away from the tenacious authority of monogamy in portraying adult intimacy in literature, what I call the narrative of “coupledom.” Instead, *Intimacy* imagines a new narrative of “singledom” unconstrained by the marriage/adultery dyad. In the next chapter on *Fury*, a novel about Manhattan’s celebrity culture, I interrogate the current discourse of cosmopolitanism and propose that Rushdie’s novel exposes how both

cosmopolitanism and nationalism are turned into political commodities by media-frenzied and celebrity-obsessed metropolitan cultural politics. In a world where an ethical choice between cosmopolitanism and nationalism is impossible to make, *Fury* achieves an ethical act of treason against both. The next chapter scrutinizes Mark Renton's "ripping off" of his best mates and his critique of capitalism in *Trainspotting* and *Porno*. If Renton betrays his friends in order to leave the plan(e) of capitalism in the original novel, he satirizes the trustworthiness of trust in *Porno* by crushing his best mate's blind trust in business "ethics" and by ripping him off again. The last full chapter updates the link between aesthetics and ethics in post-AIDS contexts in Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty*. In portraying without judgment beautiful, dark-skinned, dying homosexual bodies, Hollinghurst's novel "fleshes out" the traditional sphere of aesthetics that denies the low and impure pleasures frequently paired with gay sex. All written by male authors, these novels are set in Thatcherite London or reminisce about its aftermath, thereby displaying various British masculinities developing in complex responses to the era of the Iron Lady.¹² For instance, Renton's post-political and post-national "cool" and "hip" masculinity appears to stand in direct opposition to Thatcher, whom Renton thinks a great (sexual) turn-off. But Renton's entrepreneurial mindset and preference of Amsterdam's transnational consumerism to his Scottish working-class community intimates that he is the child of Thatcherism. Having the complicated relationships between Thatcher(ism) and the main characters of these novels in mind, this dissertation begins with the most clichéd form of betrayal, adultery, and concludes with the most abstract yet inevitable event of death, betrayer of life and beauty. In

moving from monogamy, a social contract imposing reproduction and longevity, towards an ethical vision discovered in short-lived “queer” beauty, this dissertation works to commemorate the movements in which the “base” material of betrayal creates an ethical site to expand on thoughts on love and desire, the world we live in, life and death, and good and evil. Here lies the “ethical alchemy” of betrayal conjured up again and again in these novels (Scarry 113).

CHAPTER II

AN ETHICAL ADULTERY: HANIF KUREISHI'S *INTIMACY*

It is queer the fantastic things that quite good people will do in order to keep up their appearance of calm pococurantism ... I think that it would have been better in the eyes of God if they had all attempted to gouge out each other's eyes with carving knives. But they were 'good people'.

Ford Maddox Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915), the novel from which the above quote comes, revisits the tenaciously popular theme of literature—the fundamental clash between “good” monogamous people shoring up the moral nexus of society and “bad” adulterers, whose passionate desire has the potential to disrupt social order, leaving them prone to violent acts such as “goug[ing] out each other's eyes with carving knives” (193). Narrated by the cuckolded husband John Dowell, Ford's novel recollects the “intimate” nine years the Dowells and the Ashburnhams amicably shared during which, unbeknownst only to Dowell, the triangular drama of sexual infidelities and ensuing damage control was ongoing between Edward Ashburnham, “the good soldier” and reader of sentimental novels, his wife Leonora, “the perfectly normal type” (186) who did not read novels, and Francis Dowell, who maintained her illicit relationship with a young painter-to-be Jimmy for two years after her wedding and, when it was over, became one of the many passing mistresses of Edward. The novel's denouement, in which Edward and Francis commit suicide and Leonora is rewarded with a new husband and long-awaited children, leads to Dowell's half-abnegating, half-sarcastic proclamation of the triumph of reproductive society: “Yes, society must go on; it must

breed, like rabbits. That is what we are here for” (197). In remarking that “society can only exist” if “the good,” “the normal,” and “the virtuous” flourish and “the passionate” and “the too-truthful” (197) are condemned, *The Good Solider*, if with a renewed scepticism toward the tyranny of marriage, reaffirms the old symbiosis of monogamy, the primary social contract that sustains human civilization apart from primeval disorder, and adultery, the “evil” Other that embodies all treacherous passions—uncontrollable lust, for example—threatening the ideal image of society. As Adam Phillips notes, “Monogamy comes with infidelity built in” (1996; 31). Insofar as “[w]e need our rivals to tell us who our partners are” and “[w]e need our partners to help us find rivals” (110), the triangulation of monogamy, which bewilders Dowell with its “queer” traffic between the husband, the wife, and the mistress, makes adultery a logical element of the presumably most intimate adult relationship.¹

It is little wonder that adultery has been one of the novel’s most beloved subjects. A focal site of struggles between an accepted set of values and “novel” yet thought-provoking ideas, the novel has survived by extending the borders of the permissible, that is, “adulterating” given thoughts and forms in order to initiate new narratives. In *Adultery in the Novel*, Tony Tanner argues that while the novel had a “conservative drive, serving to support what were felt to be the best morals and manners and values of the period,” the novel has always entailed “that which breaks up the family—departure, disruption, and other various modes of disintegration” (375). Since an “adulterer(ess)” effectively ‘renarrativizes’ a life that has become devoid of story,” Tanner illuminates the link between adultery and narration as follows: “without adultery, or the persistent

possibility of adultery, the novel would have been bereft of much of its narrational urge” (377). Although many studies on narratives of adultery inspired by Tanner have been published since the 1980s, a majority of these books discuss pre-twentieth-century non-English novels of adultery, or examine cultural and legal documents relating to adultery cases, profusely produced after the Matrimonial Causes Acts (1857; 1878) and the new divorce law (1923), which finally accepted recommendations of the Majority Report (1912) submitted by a Royal Commission on Divorce in Britain.² Even the monographs that acknowledge the contemporary ubiquity of the adultery plot focus on justifying adultery’s existence and its parasitic relation to marriage; hence Laura Kipnis’ “apology” for adultery in *Against Love*: “rest assured that adultery doesn’t entirely want to smash the system either: where would adultery be without marriage—it requires it!” (176). While Kipnis recognizes that “mature” domestic coupledness serves as the “boot camp for compliant citizenship, gluey resignation and immobility” (46), her effort to “adulterate” (199) the master narrative of love based on monogamous coupledness remains subjugated to the dominant marriage versus furtive adultery polarity. Kipnis’ book does not picture what an alternative plot would look like in reinventing intimate adult relationships, other than remaining unmarried (and be pitied as “immature”); being married and working doggedly for it to “work”; or engaging in an affair that will end eventually in equal bitterness with a drama of betrayal or a plunge into another monogamous commitment—and resuming the same unattractive scenario all over again.

This chapter argues that Hanif Kureishi’s *Intimacy* creates a new genesis of the novel of infidelity inasmuch as it breaks away from the circular binary of marriage and

adultery. Jay, a middle-aged writer in London resembling Kureishi, walks out on Susan—his monogamous partner for ten years—and two young sons not in order to join the lover, but to dwell in the realm of “flirtation” which, in Phillips’ words, “keep things in play, and by doing so lets us get to know them in different ways” (1994; xii). If Tanner’s remark, “contracts *create* transgressions” (original italics 11), assumes a conditional transgression that can only be achieved against the backdrop of marital Law, Jay’s imperative to renounce the central institution of intimacy is more radical—more radical because Jay’s betrayal rejects the commitment to any moral ideologies prescribing “good” and “bad” modes of intimacy as implied in the marriage/adultery dyad. Faithful less to the long-disappeared mistress in the novel than to the flirtatious desire to “re-open, to rework, the plot” (1994; 25) of intimacy, Kureishi’s novel reimagines a story of infidelity uninflected by this dyad. Not confined to sexual infidelity, Jay’s betrayal of the status quo connotes his faith in hope, the future, and change which, I argue, comprises the core of a new ethic in constant search of “the better.” In this sense, *Intimacy*’s adultery is an ethical one, pursuing beyond good and evil—the better.

The first section of this chapter briefly examines prior studies of adultery and/in literature and recent discourses on intimacy in order to emphasize the adamant authority of monogamy in representations of adult intimacy in Western literature. A concise mapping of postwar British narratives of infidelity, from Angry Young Man fiction to the novels of Doris Lessing, Iris Murdoch, and Anita Brookner, to recent novels by Ian McEwan and Zadie Smith, will show that these contemporary novels, while they critique

the institution of marriage, nonetheless reiterate the symbiosis between marriage and adultery rather than doing away with it. As Davida Pines argues, the “unassailable” marriage plot continues to “interfere with our ability to envision and enact acceptable alternatives to... ‘long-term, property-sharing, monogamous couplehood’” (2).

The second part of the chapter analyzes *Intimacy*’s revolutionary withdrawal from this master narrative composed of peremptory marriage and morally branded adultery. To investigate morally stigmatized acts of betrayal, including adultery, from a non-moralist perspective requires a rethinking of ethical literary criticism. If western ethical literary criticism has aimed at locating the Good in literature and at *serving* moral philosophy since Aristotle, Leo Bersani argues that literature functions “not as a guardian of cultural and ethical values” but “as a preeminent plotmaker” (1990; 198). Bersani’s emphasis on literature’s power of “out-plotting” the status quo—rather than on its maintenance—urges us to build a new ethical-critical apparatus that must relinquish moral majoritarianism and judgmentalism in reading literature; I call this critical field “post-moral” criticism. In discussing hostile and judgmental reviews of *Intimacy*, this section makes room for this new criticism by taking issue with the simplistic good/bad bifurcation stipulated by society. Drawing on works by Freud, Phillips, and Michael Cobb, who are interested less in grand moral absolutes than in “useful errors, instructive (and destructive) mistakes, radical roads not taken” (Bersani and Phillips *vii*), post-moral criticism will be fundamental to theorizing an ethic of betrayal embodied in Jay’s adulterous desire for “the better.”

Adultery or, the Logic of Heterosexual Coupledness

Two pioneering studies on the theme of adultery, Denis de Rougemont's *Love in the Western World* and Tanner's *Adultery in the Novel*, undertake the ambitious task of answering each of the following questions: why adultery, "to judge by literature," has been "one of the most remarkable of occupations in both Europe and America" (de Rougemont 16); and why the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novel, although it ultimately moved towards marriage, "often gain[ed] its particular narrative urgency from an energy that threatens to contravene that stability of the family on which society depends" (Tanner 4). Starting from the myth of Tristan and Iseult, de Rougemont's book traces "our obsession by the love that breaks the law" (17). This lawless passion, *Eros*, was a religion on its own until it had become a Christian heresy opposed to *Agape*—marriage that secures and procreates—in the twelfth century; the vogue of adultery in literature has testified to the "secularization" and "profanation of the form and contents" (137) of this mythic Romance. While Tanner's book discusses novels by Rousseau, Goethe, and Flaubert, its lengthy introduction provides a penetrating theorization of how marriage operated as the "all-subsuming, all-organizing, all-containing contract" (15) in bourgeois society and of how adultery had rendered this Contract unstable, intimating a "collapse back into a state of severance and separateness in which bonds and contracts do not hold" (65).

While de Rougemont's and Tanner's insights have been amply discussed and fully appreciated,³ what I find noteworthy for the purpose of this chapter are their

conclusions. After exploring nearly a thousand years of the battling history of *Eros* and *Agape*, de Rougemont convincingly calls marital fidelity not a “real fidelity but a feasible fidelity” (305). He rightly notes: fidelity is “the least natural of virtues [and] faithful marriage needs inhuman effort” (306). De Rougemont’s book, however, concludes with an implausible anticipation of the day when “fidelity discloses its mystery” (323), an unconvincing ending on a religious note. Tanner’s conclusion borrows from contemporary French thinkers, such as Bataille, Foucault, Girard, and Lacan, in order to show the inseparability of monogamy and adultery, of contracts and transgressions. Tanner quotes from Bataille: “the forbidden is there to be violated” (375). Yet, despite his emphasis on transgression and its potential to open up “the limitlessness of being” (Ibid.), Tanner does not move beyond the contract/transgression binary. In stating that “the problem is by definition you cannot transform transgression and profanation into a regular way of life” (377), Tanner suggests the narrational necessity of various modes of death for an adulteress at the end: Emma Bovary’s social death and physical suicide provide a prime example.

The recent flood of studies of adultery, for all their helpful analyses of the topic from sociological and historical perspectives, do not break free from the authority of marriage either. Most of them written by female scholars on female adulterers and, ironically enough, dedicated to their husbands in many cases—“To My Truly Ideal Husband” (Rippon)—these studies on adultery underwrite the false belief that this is a “woman problem”; the marriage system is left unchallenged. My contention is that these books ultimately contribute to the Foucauldian “repressive hypothesis” of adultery. By

incessantly talking about adultery, analyzing all its variants and charting cases, the discourse of adultery turns this inhibited behavior into a *known secret*, which, as a result, facilitates society's policing of the intimate lives of its members. Similarly, despite the seemingly neat symmetry between monogamy and adultery, adultery is entirely circumvented by marriage: the "marital panopticon" (2000; 35), in Kipnis' words. Louise DeSalvo's *Adultery*, an engaging book in its own way, exemplifies this reincorporation of adultery into marriage. Based on the author's own experience of her husband's cheating and the "healing" of this wound, DeSalvo's book acknowledges adultery's charm: it creates "a completely new, startling, and (we think) exciting story to tell others about ourselves" (29). DeSalvo's "therapeutic" writing, however, serves as a good example of Foucault's hypothesis insofar as her writing transforms the intractable, illicit desire into a comprehensible, "normalized" aberrance of monogamy.

Another superb example of the marital system's encapsulating power can be found in a recent discourse of intimacy. In *The Transformation of Intimacy*, Anthony Giddens coins such terms as "pure relationship," which means "a relationship of sexual and emotional equality," and "plastic sexuality," which signifies "decentered sexuality freed from needs of reproduction" (2), in order to explain this curious new idea of intimacy as *the* basis of marriage and family, the foremost economic and procreative units of the past. In the sense that intimacy assumes equality, trust, and communication of both sides involved, Giddens welcomes the rise of intimacy as opening up a new democracy of emotions. Giddens' celebration of intimacy is extended to the global level in *The Runaway World*. According to Giddens, plastic sexuality, which allows for *all*

kinds of sexual activities regardless of the heterosexual-reproductive principle, only limited by “the principle of autonomy and by the negotiated norms of the pure relationship” (1992; 197), will not only help lessen the inequality between men and women but also resolve the struggle between cosmopolitanism, which endorses democracy and egalitarianism, and fundamentalism, which is characterized by its oppression of women and traditional familialism. Giddens’ promotion of democratic coupledness founded upon intimacy, however, is duly criticized for normalizing and moralizing the private sphere of intimacy. In *Love’s Confusions*, C. D. C. Reeve comments on plastic sexuality that “what is plastic, notoriously, is easily molded” (171). Noting that Giddens renders eroticism “pallid” by enclosing it within a public discourse subject to moral and political norms, Reeve wishes to leave the mystery of intimacy intact.⁴

In addition to Giddens’ and Reeve’s discussions of intimacy, there has been an intriguing development of the discourse of intimacy in the light of psychoanalysis, queer theories, and literary studies in the last decade.⁵ Among others, a collection of essays entitled *Intimacy* (2000) is particularly helpful in revealing how intimacy is routinely institutionalized in the service of normative citizenship, in the words of the editor, Lauren Berlant, “how public institutions use issues of intimate life to normalize particular forms of knowledge and practice and to create compliant subjects” (8). In contrast to “the modern, mass-mediated sense of intimacy” (2) defined in terms of marriage and therapy, Berlant argues that intimacy “rarely makes sense of things” (6). This is because intimacy, “in its instantiation of desire” (Ibid.), destabilizes what

institutions of intimacy are created to fortify—commitment and fidelity. In place of the “canonical” intimacy of coupledness, Berlant suggests that we need to look into what she calls “minor intimacies,” such as “the glances, gestures, encounters, collaborations, or fantasies that have no canon” (5).

Kipnis’ “Adultery” that follows Berlant’s introduction argues that adultery stands for all types of “tawdriness and bad behavior” (14) in current society, endangering both intimate daily life and the very moral fabric of the nation. Kipnis argues that in “the Marriage Takes Work regime of normative intimacy” (18), adulterers’ wholesale rejection of the marital Contract in favor of unproductive and purposeless pleasure comprises a structural transgression. What is regrettable is an instant branding of this refusal of the social system as “childishness or churlishness” (28). That is to say, adultery and adulteration has become “such a middlebrow enterprise” (Ibid.) today. For all the popularity of the term “desire,” Kipnis notes, “desiring not to be emotionally dead” (22) is seen as banal, immature, and shameful.

The major achievements of Berlant’s and Kipnis’ essays, however, lie in their demonstrations of the degree to which the current talk about intimacy is handled by ideologies of nation, family, and conjugal love, rather than in their invention of new modes of intimacy, a non-institutionalized eroticism indifferent to the regime of monogamy. Bersani and Phillips’ slim polemic, *Intimacies* (2008), is groundbreaking inasmuch as it proposes a new form of “impersonal intimacy” (117). According to Bersani and Phillips, the fundamental problem of human relations derives from our ego-identities, which are innately aggressive and which would not hesitate to destroy

whatever comes in their way in order to protect the righteousness of our selfhood. Adapting Plato's *Phaedrus*, Bersani and Phillips attempt to remove the oppositional identities between the active lover and the passive loved one by inaugurating "a kind of reciprocal self-recognition in which the very opposition between sameness and difference becomes irrelevant as a structuring category of being" (87). In this innovative relationship, where sex means less a collusion than a dissolution of egos, intimacy designates "an openness to the ultimate in impersonality" (116). Impersonal intimacy, which is neither promiscuity nor complete equality, will invalidate the hostile distinction between the self and the Other, and the same and the different, in having a relationship.

Bersani and Phillips' compelling discussion of impersonal intimacy, however, proves inept to provide a new model of heterosexual intimacy insofar as this notion of impersonal intimacy, as Bersani argues in his earlier study of the same topic, is best embodied in gay desire's "revolutionary inaptitude for heteroized sociality" (7); hence Bersani's book title, *Homos*. Since impersonal intimacy emerges in bringing out a "homo-ness" (Ibid.) beyond the sameness/difference binary—the "homo" that is literally lacking in "hetero"sexuality—Bersani's and Phillips' books, intended or not, render heterosexual relationship obsolete and incorrigible. An evolving field of heterosexuality studies has been instrumental to denaturalizing heterosexuality and heterosexual coupledness, making these concepts as invented, constructed, and "impossibly difficult" (Katz 3) as homosexuality.⁶ Nevertheless, while homosexual promiscuity is not necessarily incompatible with intimacy, heterosexual intimacy can only be sanctioned through making it official and monogamous. Just as Berlant argues for "minor

intimacies” that bypass the narrative of monogamous coupledness, it is exigent to locate minor narratives of heterosexual intimacy that reject being fossilized into monogamy, the marital Law’s unrealistic command of lifelong commitment in the malleable name of love.

One might argue that there has been a plethora of such minor narratives of intimacy that problematize oppressive marriage. I argue that although the “marriage and its discontents” type of narrative is copiously used in postwar British fiction, film, and drama, its critique of marriage fails to subvert the contract of marriage. Far from disrupting the Contract, the majority of adulterers resort to extramarital affairs for a momentary escape from dire reality, and their movements are never derailed from the monorail, whose two terminals are invariably monogamy and infidelity. In contrast to classic novels of adultery such as Leo Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* and Gustav Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, where adulterous passion ends up tragically as a result of its fierce challenge to society, in postwar adultery narrative the adulterer is neither a radical rebel nor a victim of uncontrollable desire leading to his or her own destruction. For example, the “quintessentially British film” (Dyer 41), Noel Coward and David Lean’s *Brief Encounter* (1945), tells of Laura (Celia Johnson)’s seven weekly encounters with Alec (Trevor Howard) at the Milford railway station. Throughout the film, both Laura’s comfortable marriage with two children and her demure fling with the personable doctor remain respectable. In Angry Young Man novels such as John Braine’s *Room at the Top* and Alan Sillitoe’s *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, young working-class dissidents’ affairs with married women represent their rebellion against conformity to

the Affluent Society in the late 1950s. Nonetheless, both of these novels marry off their anti-heroes—the ambitious Joe Lampton and the helplessly resentful Arthur Seaton—with proper domestic virgins, demonstrating that they have “outgrown” their youthful deviances and become mature members of society.⁷

The theme of marriage—its frustration and everlasting lure—has preoccupied works of female novelists in the latter half of the twentieth century: Doris Lessing, Iris Murdoch, and Anita Brookner. Although all of them refuse to be labeled “feminist writers,” many of their novels thoroughly examine the oftentimes ruinous effects of marriage, but leave the wife/mistress, coupledness/spinster, and marriage /Romance binaries untackled. Anna Wulf in Lessing’s *The Golden Notebook* (1962) is a socialist-writer who calls herself a “free woman”; but she is by no means free as her life and writing verge on breakdown, traumatized by the “Shadow of the Third” (Anna’s book title denoting the wives of numerous men with whom Anna has affairs). Murdoch’s exquisite comedy of errors, *A Fairly Honorable Defeat* (1970), appears to ridicule marriage by showing how easily the high-minded Rupert betrays his wife Hilda. However, in celebrating the then-illegal homosexual relationship between Axel and Simon, who replicate an ideal heterosexual monogamy, Murdoch’s novel blames human vulnerability, not the rigid terms of marital fidelity, for the collapse of marriage. Referred to as a “Harlequin romance for highbrows” (Bayles 38), Brookner’s *Hotel de Lac* (1984) narrates the stalemate of a romance writer named Edith Hope, who, with Jamesian politeness, is caught between the equally impossible choices of living her dream as an “domestic animal” (99) married to—in effect owned by—a tasteless man, or

of remaining the mistress of David, “the breath of life to me” (179), who would never leave his wife to marry Edith.

In today’s “high marriage, high divorce” society, the pursuit of uncommitted intimacy transcending the circle of marriage-affair-marriage seems “the next lost cause” (Kipnis 2000; 17). As people avidly read *Find a Husband after 35 (Using What I Learned in Harvard Business School)* (Greenwald) and *If I’m so Wonderful, Why Am I Still Single?* (Page) in order to resolve an Austenian question in the 2000s, representations of intimacy appear bifurcated between the mindless glorification of romantic weddings and helpless sarcasm towards it. A look at sarcastic, pessimistic portrayals of monogamy in recent novels, including Julian Barnes’ *Before She Met Me* (1992), Ian McEwan’s *Enduring Love* (1998), Salman Rushdie’s *Fury* (2001), and Zadie Smith’s *On Beauty* (2005), indicates that although adulterers’ choices are broadened to include other races, sexes, and generations, the marriage that engenders such adulteries by dictating limited terms of expressing intimacy remains undisputed.⁸

Intimacy: Betrayal, Desire, Ethics

Intimacy traces Jay’s train of thoughts one evening and overnight, from looking back on his rebellious youth in the hip seventies, to reflecting on his bourgeois yet mind-numbing present as a husband, to deciding to leave what he has and is. Beginning with the sentence, “It is the saddest night, for I am leaving and not coming back” (3), Kureishi’s novel has been called “sad”—“almost unbearably sad” (Rance)—for his scathingly honest description of the disillusioning experience of falling out of love; or

damned as a “repugnant little book” (Proctor) and “tawdry odious book” (Hofmann) for Jay’s act of abandoning his partner, Susan, and his two sons, aged five and three. While sixteen reviews that I refer to in this chapter neglect to notice the varied reasons for Jay’s leaving, including his not being able to “make her a cup of tea” (73) and his “yearning for more life” (61), focusing on his past affairs in order to brand him as an unstoppable adulterer going through a midlife crisis, what distinguishes *Intimacy* from previous narratives of adultery is Jay’s faith in betrayal as a way of moving on for the better:

I have been trying to convince myself that leaving someone isn’t the worst thing you can do to them. Sombre it may be, but it doesn’t have to be a tragedy. If you never left anything or anyone there would be no room for the new. Naturally, to move on is an infidelity—to others, to the past, to old notions of oneself. Perhaps every day should contain at least one essential infidelity or necessary betrayal. It would be an optimistic, hopeful act guaranteeing belief in the future—a declaration that things can be not only different but better. (5)

Even though the plummeting degree of intimacy between Jay and Susan, who “won’t wake up for [him]” while Jay is “undressing in the dark” (90), appears a primary reason why he walks out, for Jay intimacy, “to lay your hand on another’s body, or to put your mouth against another’s,” signifies “uncovering a whole life” (16), the life that Jay believes is rooted in the “curiosity and the desire for more” (74). Defending Jay’s difficult choice that “if you are alive you will rebel” (69), Kureishi’s novel concludes with a dreamlike passage in which Jay reminisces about a blissful moment with his unidentified past lover. In the sense that Jay decides not to call his former mistress Nina (whose voice is barely heard throughout the novel) in the morning when he moves out in the penultimate passage, *Intimacy* breaks out of the circular binary of marriage/adultery and affirms the value of infidelity that would constantly search for a new intimacy and a

“better” life.

How, then, does Jay’s act of infidelity disrupt the symmetry between monogamy and infidelity and subvert the hierarchy between the two? As Derrida’s influential analysis of logocentrism shows, the superiority is invariably invested in the former half of the binary as in the self/the Other, man/woman, and hetero-/homosexuality: in this case, on marriage. Jay, however, never married Susan as he despised family only as a “machine for the suppression and distortion of free individuals” (55). Jay observes that he has been told the reasons for “the institution of permanent marriage—its being a sacrament, an oath, a promise, all that. Or a profound and irrevocable commitment to the principle as much as to the person” (Ibid.). Jay asks: “I can’t quite remember the force and the detail of the argument. Does anyone?” Jay’s friend Asif, a schoolteacher, seems to remember the force of the argument. An implausible combination of “integrity,” “principle,” and “stability” who “refused all that eighties cynicism” (32) and a Victorian romantic, who reads Christina Rossetti’s poems to his wife and kids, Asif advises against Jay’s decision to leave, puzzled by the fact that an “old man” his age can show such passion. Asif says, “All yearn for more. We are never satisfied. Wisdom is to know the value of what we have” (99). Responding to Asif that “rushing away from” means “running towards other” (Ibid.), Jay asks the reader: “why do people who are good at families have to be smug and assume it is the only way to live, as if everybody else is inadequate? Why can’t they be blamed for being bad at promiscuity?” (33). Jay’s question urges the reader to stop treating monogamy as the norm and rethink the potential of infidelity as “our other word for change” (Phillips; 1996 8).

Intimacy's attempt to relieve the moral stigma of infidelity resonates with Phillips' insights in *Monogamy*. In this slender collection of penetrating adages, Phillips wonders why the opposite of monogamy is "not just promiscuity, but the absence or the impossibility of relationship itself" (98). If prior studies of monogamy and adultery eventually reincorporate adultery to the system of monogamy, Phillips argues that monogamy cannot be the end of our life stories, for monogamy is "too wishfully neat, too symmetrical for the proper mess that a life is" (75). Since "our vices are as much our invention as our virtues" (112), to adhere to the virtuous monogamy versus vicious infidelity opposition will result in nothing new but punishment and blame: the same old stories. After all, according to Phillips, we are forced to settle down in monogamy not because we believe in it, but because we fear excess: "an excess of solitude and an excess of company" (98). Jay, too, strives to figure out intimacy, what he calls "the right distance between people" (71). Rather than remaining torn between the equally dissatisfying choices of marriage and adultery as previous adulterers do, Jay opts out of this old plot altogether in order to turn this "crucible" (116) into an opportunity of making the new: "A breakdown is a breakthrough is a breakout...Nothing interesting happens without daring" (38).

To borrow Kureishi's words suggestive of Lacanian psychoanalysis, what *Monogamy* and *Intimacy* accomplish is to "alter the symbol system" (Thomas 4).⁹ By letting us alter the way we think about moral binaries and the way we prefer one to the other, these two books endow new power in the latter terms that have been discredited, such as desire, infidelity, and the unconscious. In an interview with Susie Thomas,

Kureishi, a self-proclaimed “big fan of the unconscious” (4), notes that the unconscious is the receptacle of all our desires, which are the most important parts of ourselves yet which are “culpable” (11) by nature. Contrary to our wish to live and love innocent, falling in love is “a dirty business” (12). This is why we need to accept the fact that “to take your pleasure is to damage other people” and “to live in the world is to be dangerous” (Ibid.). Kureishi’s belief in intractable desire, whose value lies in its rebellion against social oppression and individual inertia, provides a compelling *raison d’être* of Jay’s departure from his stagnant relationship with Susan:

People don’t want you to have too much pleasure; they think it’s bad for you. You might start wanting it all the time. How unsettling is desire! That devil never sleeps or keeps still. Desire is naughty and doesn’t conform to our ideals, which is why we have such a need of them. Desire mocks all human endeavour and makes it worthwhile. Desire is the original anarchist and undercover agent – no wonder people want it arrested and kept in a safe place. And just when we think we’ve got desire under control it lets us down or fills us with hope. Desire makes me laugh because it makes fools of us all. Still, rather a fool than a fascist. (34)

This passage, along with Jay’s ensuing words that “deliberate moral infringement” is set up in order to “preserve the idea of justice and meaning in the world” (Ibid.), bears a striking resemblance to the two essential arguments of Freud’s *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Freud argues that first, what is “bad” is not at all what is “injurious or dangerous to the ego” but often “something which is desirable and enjoyable to the ego” (85). Second, civilization controls the individual’s dangerous desire for pleasure and aggression “by setting up an agency within him to watch over it” (84), that is, the super-ego. Hence Freud’s famous conclusion of the volume: “the creation of a great human community would be most successful if no attention had to be paid to the happiness of

the individual” (105). Again, thoughts of Phillips, a Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalyst, are felicitous to clarifying the link between desire as conceptualized in *Intimacy* and an ethical possibility illuminated by it.

In “The Uses of Desire,” Phillips updates the Lacanian notion of desire as lack. If desire as lack has been criticized for its presumed longing for the completion of lack, Phillips refutes this Arcadian longing for completion and argues that what desire lacks is what makes desire desirable. Phobic about lack, we make every effort to “make a felt absence intelligible,” as in “two halves in search of each other” (169). As much as we like to think in terms of completion, perfection, or closure, Phillips argues, “what this lack itself, by definition, lacks is accurate representation” (Ibid.). Similarly, desire, while it is “a function central to all human experience” (170), is the desire for nothing nameable. It is in the experience of desire, “an exact function of this lack” (Ibid.), that there emerges room to talk about being. An ethical possibility of desire derives from its ability to make this room for new stories of our lives. Since desire allows us to “imagine a wanting not in the form of a knowing” (164), to invent a story of “my desiring self” (181) is inherently an ethical act for its failure to forge a coherent master narrative. Having little to do with “normative life stories” (Bersani and Phillips 91), Jay’s fidelity to desire leads him to “out-plot” the seamless narrative of monogamous coupledness by creating a new plot of intimacy based on “flirtation,” a state of being related without commitment. In *On Flirtation*, Phillips argues that flirtation can add other stories by “unsettling preferences and priorities” (xxv). By deciding to be undecided about social values and virtues in favor of the “sheer unpredictability” and “contingency” of our

lives, flirtation sustains the life of desire. Jay's wish to live an uncommitted life embodies what I call an "ethic of flirtation," an ethical act that calls into question the master narrative of intimacy mandated by society.

"An ethic of flirtation" provides a useful term for the post-moral criticism that I hope to establish in this chapter. The groundwork for this type of criticism can be found in works of several French thinkers, Bataille, Barthes, Badiou, and Lacan, to name a few. Although the works of these thinkers are too complicated and different to be clustered together under a label of post-structuralism or postmodernism, their thoughts share a keen interest in whatever would occupy the latter half of logocentric binaries, in other words, what is hidden from, beyond the grasp of, and unmanageable by reason, the sign, and the social. The following instances come to mind: Bataille's preoccupation with the themes of evil, erotism, death, and the curse in literature; Barthes' definition of truth as "what world regards as madness, illusion, error" (230); Badiou's notion of art as the Hysteric who ultimately escapes the Master's grasp; and the Lacanian ethics of desire, implied in the title of a chapter in his *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, "Have You Acted in Conformity with Your Desire?"¹⁰ Not interested in the moral function of literature, which is to represent the normative Good, their works suggest models for a post-moral criticism. Their illumination of the value of morally dubious acts and desires is ethical in the fullest sense of the word, for ethics comes into existence as an act of defiance against the "cultivated normalization of human thought and experience" (Goodchild 8). In spite of the power of these theories, however, an ethical act proves difficult to achieve in society. An apt example of this difficulty, Lacan's ethics of desire assumes the

impossibility of its realization because desire as conceptualized by Lacan belongs to the Real, the realm which we have lost touch with on our acquiring language and growing into the Symbolic. As Kureishi acknowledges to trying to “alter the symbol system” through his novel, I argue that Jay’s choice of flirtation constitutes a plausible ethical act—if not a Lacanian Act—that holds Symbolic thoughts on intimacy, marriage, and infidelity at bay.

If *Intimacy*’s attempt to destabilize the marriage/adultery dyad through a plot of flirtation seems a modest diversion rather than a radically ethical task, uniformly harsh reviews of Kureishi’s novel illustrate how difficult—and brave—it is to challenge conventional morality. Showcasing an essentialist and moralist approach, a majority of reviews pin down Jay as a “middle-class, heterosexual misogynist” and “a race-oblivious über-macho” (Aldama). Once celebrated as the “bad boy novelist” (Zaleski) and “pop kid” (Campbell) of London’s literary scene, Kureishi is now accused of growing up, “ill-equipped to deal with real life” in “mind-numbing self-absorption” (Mendelsohn 1999). Other reviewers agree on Jay’s “male solipsism” (Steinberg and Zaleski), calling him a “minor-league Casanova” (Ibid.) and “a vain, sex-obsessed man” (Sexton). Walter Kirn adds the privilege of education and wealth to charges of Jay’s selfishness and promiscuity. In Kirn’s words, *Intimacy* represents nothing other than the “bloodless luxury” of the tedious mid-aged man, set in “media-savvy upscale London, where passionless unions are hardly news, particularly among the rich and educated.” What reviewers find the least forgivable is the novel’s treatment of Susan. In portraying Susan as “an amalgam of vicious insults” (Cummings) and “a yuppie neat freak” (Kirn), critics

readily pronounce “a virtual feminist *fatwah* over *Intimacy*” (qtd. in Kumar 118). To borrow from Laura Cummings, *Intimacy*’s misogyny cannot be seen as nothing but “pure pathology.” While Kureishi observes in an interview that all the bile against *Intimacy* remains a “mystery” (Kumar 131) to him, these hostile reviews are symptomatic of a judgmentalism endemic to literary criticism.

These reviews expose their moralism in their misleading accusation of *Intimacy*’s rampant misogyny. It is true that the description of Susan offends the reader’s moral sensibility on the surface. A Cambridge graduate and an executive in a publishing company, Susan represents a good middle-class girl who likes to “please,” whose dedication to unpleasant social forms such as “duty, sacrifice, obligation to others, self-discipline” (53) explains “why young women are so suitable for the contemporary working world” (23). Intent on making her home a “thoroughfare for the service industries” (22) rather than “lubricate on the splendors and depths of her mind” (23), Susan is vain, small-minded, and “completely uninteresting” (24). In Jay’s words that have inflamed female reviewers, “She thinks she’s a feminist but she’s just bad-tempered” (79). Other descriptions of Susan—her “fat, red weeping face” (75) and her pubic hair which is “not as luxuriant and soft as Nina’s” (102)—risk exhibiting a callous misogyny “that verges on the psychotic” (qtd. in Proctor 39). Jay’s characterization of Susan, however, has no bearing on misogyny because what *Intimacy* “hates” is not women but the narrow “essence” of femininity that stunts women’s development of the mind. Kureishi stresses that he has “no ambivalence about feminism; it’s obviously the most important social movement...absolutely crucial to what’s changed in the West”

(Thomas 7). Kureishi's objection is to "essentialist feminism," which turns women into essences such as earth mothers and matriarchs; Kureishi believes that this is "too limiting" and that "there's no particular way of being a woman" (Ibid.). Far from being a misogynist, Kureishi calls himself a "romantic" (Mackenzie). Written by a firm believer in "the possibilities of intimacy" (101), this novel is filled with romantic maxims: "without love most of life remains concealed" (71); "love and women's bodies [are] at the center of everything worth living for" (100); "It is better to fear things than be bored by them, and life without love is a long boredom" (11).

To interpret Jay as a misogynist *betrays* reviewers' gendered moralism connoted in the rational man versus emotional woman bifurcation. Using such phrases as "men have become the new woman" (Moore) and the "new fashion for misogyny" (Sexton), reviewers frame Jay within a prototype of the middle-aged, once-sexy novelist who, not interested in women their age or able to attract young women any longer, has become a bitter misogynist, wallowing—supposedly like "women"—in his misery. Thus, Jay's "superior" status as a well-to-do married heterosexual writer renders him all the more guilty for being so immature (not ready for "real life") and selfish. The unexceptional condemnation of Jay's infidelity makes an intriguing contrast to literary representations of women's betrayals, especially women of various minorities, which are often glorified as acts of subversion.¹¹ In reworking the plot of subversive sexual betrayal in light of a privileged heterosexual man, *Intimacy* problematizes the hierarchization between maturity and immaturity, self-centeredness and selflessness, and the rational and the emotive, oppositions often understood in gendered contexts.

By “problematize” I do not mean that *Intimacy* “feminizes” Jay’s character in order to render him a better narrator for the question of marriage and adultery. In *The Transformation of Intimacy*, Giddens defines “masculinity as psychic damage” (151) and argues that men need to work on their emotions in order to survive a new era underscoring intimacy: “Do not seek so fervently to change the world: change yourself first” (152). In short, men must become “the weaker sex” (151) in this feminized world. Kureishi’s novel, however, has no interest in reclaiming or disowning masculinity, a term for a limited set of gender roles fabricated by society. As a small number of discerning reviewers note, “No one comes out of this novel looking worse than the protagonist himself” (Rance). In *The Richmond Review*, Polly Rance is rightly struck by the ruthless portrayal of Jay as a “middle-class, middle-aged, middle-brow loser,” which makes Jay no less unlikable than Susan. Nonetheless, it is Kureishi’s dexterity as a writer that allows the reader “total empathy with him,” if not sympathy for a character, who is at once “childlike, childish, adolescent and bitterly adult.” Indeed, in this slim novel of 118 pages covering what happens in less than a twenty-four hour period, Jay exhibits a remarkable range of thoughts that overflow any gendered categorization. Kureishi delineates feelings from Jay’s violent and obscene impulses, to his fine passion for life, art, and beauty, to his acute social comments, to sentimental vignettes of erotic moments. While some of Jay’s multifarious traits can still fall into reductive gendered categories—violent being masculine and sentimental feminine, for example—Jay’s “cruelty” is always accompanied by his vulnerability and self-reflection. On criticizing Susan, Jay asks notwithstanding, “Have I tried hard enough?” and feels sorry for her for

having to put up with him, a “morose, over-sensitive, self-absorbed fool” (61). Jay’s story of a desiring being cannot be judged within the gendered categorization of feelings that the reviewers of the novel evince.

Intimacy’s deconstruction of moral boundaries in order to reinvent ethical values is demonstrated by Kureishi’s (porno)graphic, offensive language as well. Enraged by his therapist’s preaching on “contentment,” “maturity and acceptance” (74) in place of passion and enthusiasm, Jay imagines “[his] face between Nina’s legs...my tongue in all her holes at once – tears, dribble, cunt juice, strawberries! I suck up the soup of your love” (75). He asks the “soul doctor” derisively “who tickles their tongue in your old hole?” (Ibid.). Calling life “the best pornography” (83), Jay dares to say: “there are some fucks for which a person would have their partner and children drown in a freezing sea” (91). A reviewer dismisses these lines as “a jerk’s creed” and as deserving to “hang round Kureishi’s neck” (Sexton). Other graphic examples of Jay’s self-embarrassment include the hilariously sad scene where he tries to masturbate at midnight, an act that now requires “concentration and considerable labour,” and feels “more likely to weep than ejaculate” when he sees in the mirror “a grey-haired, grimacing, mad-eyed, monkey-like figure” (84); calling himself “a dog under the table, hoping for a biscuit, not a crumb” (59), Jay thinks that if Susan lets him have sex with her on the floor just once, he will not leave; the night before Jay leaves, he tries to pick up a young woman at a disco club for a one-night stand, but is punched in the face by her boyfriend.

I contend that Jay’s shameful words and acts, so repellant to reviewers’ moral sensibilities, challenge what Bersani condemns as the “sanitizing project” (1987; 221) of

sex, that is, the domestication of its aggressiveness and pleasures. Bersani argues that the “profound moral revulsion of sex” (215) facilitates its gentrification and prettification. But the sexual, having nothing to do with “Whitmanisque democracy” (206), is based upon the subordination-mastery structure of the two selves. Bersani asserts that it is through the sacrifice of our ideal selfhoods that the sexual, not in a romanticized version of it but in its most untamed form, can stop today’s prevalent personal, social, and political violence. Jay’s willingness to acknowledge his aggressive, raw sexual desire represents what I would term an “ethic of shame,” the shame through which he is able to cleanse himself of his ego-ideal, inviting a fundamental revision of himself. In Bersani and Phillips’ words, “in shame we are (violently) separated from our preferred image of ourselves...and so to bear with the experience of shame, to go through it rather than to be paralyzed by mortification, is to yield to a radical reconfiguration of oneself” (110). An ethic of shame comprises another post-moral ethic in addition to the ethic of flirtation I discuss earlier in this chapter. By employing a morally shameful protagonist who exposes self-serving moralism and hints at a new selfless ethic, *Intimacy* moves beyond “a shop-worn tale of sexual infidelity” into a study of ethical “betrayal [as] a form of self-renewal” (Steinberg and Zaleski); or, of “losing oneself” (41; 111) as Jay wishes multiple times in the novel.

Intent on tackling Jay’s “misogyny” and “selfishness,” reviewers fail to appreciate other aspects of Kureishi’s novel. For example, Jay’s perspicacious epigrams, such as “It is easy to kill oneself off without dying” (11) and “patience is a virtue only in children and the imprisoned” (51), are belittled as “karaoke Shaw” (Kirn)

and “pseudo-philosophizing” (Mendelsohn 1999). What have been oddly lost to reviewers are Jay’s comments on society and culture, which disillusion him and lead him to look inwards. At the beginning of the novel, Jay expresses his disenchantment from mass media, which he once believed to be the “apotheosis of the defiantly shallow” (18). Now Jay resents “being bombarded by vulgarity, emptiness and repetition,” bred by TV and other media, and being bullied by “the forcible democratization of the intellect” (19). Jay’s repulsion at the “democracy” of the intellect, along with his “highbrow” taste for a Vivienne Westwood jacket, photos of John Lennon, and “dark Beethoven [as] my God” (44), might brand him as a somewhat conceited egoist. Jay’s next words, however, demonstrate his ability to rethink his rebellious youth in a self-critical way:

Like the hippies we disdained materialism. Yet we were less frivolous than the original ‘heads’... We were an earnest and moral generation, with severe politics. We were the last generation to defend communism. I knew people who holidayed in Albania; apparently the beaches are exquisite. An acquaintance supported the Soviet Union the day they invaded Afghanistan. We were dismissive and contemptuous of Thatcherism, but so captivated by our own ideological obsession that we couldn’t see its appeal. (53)

Jay deplores the fact that all his hippie friends—including himself—have “grown up,” have taken jobs in popular media and made loads of money, and have suffered from the “bottomless dissatisfaction and the impossibility of happiness,” fooled by the “promise of luxury that in fact promoted endless work” (54). In blaming the hypocrisy of his “earnest and moral generation” for the “elevation of greed as a political credo” (Ibid.), Jay once again warns of the moral ideology’s service to society as opposed to individual happiness. In terms that echo Foucault’s notion of discourse, Jay astutely remarks that the seemingly liberating talking culture today never amounts to “revolution” but merely

facilitates a series of “adjustments” (Ibid.). This is why Jay renounces the social and shifts to “individualism, sensualism, creative idleness,” and “human imagination: its delicacy, its brutal aggressive energy, its profundity and power to transform the material world into art” (100). He believes that these qualities can open up a new ethic of intimacy freed from oppressive moral ideologies assumed in the monogamy/infidelity polarization. Thinking that these individualistic values might sound too selfish, Jay notes: “I can think of few more selfish institutions than the family” (101). Family is most selfish because, as a repository of compliant citizens, it disseminates and “haunts us all” with an “Arcadian fantasy that there will be a time when everyone will finally agree” (82).¹²

Last but not least, *Intimacy* illuminates a post-moral value of lying, and in so doing invents an ethic of lying. Ironically enough, a handful of positive reviews on Kureishi’s novel of betrayal are exclusively about its honesty. Cynthia Katona and Suzanne Moore appreciate *Intimacy*’s “surprising honesty” and “brutal sexual honesty,” respectively. The most sympathetic reviewer, Rance, admires Kureishi’s “brilliant new novel” for its “savagely contemporary statement” and “appallingly honest and almost anatomical dissection of ‘the modern relationship’.” While these reviewers’ recognition of the novel is welcomed, their focus on the virtue of honesty—even if it is being honest about Jay’s betrayal—shows how they inevitably resort to the moralistic good and bad opposition in order to say the book is “good.” Honesty in *Intimacy*, however, is not “intellectually or emotionally very stirring” (Shklar 174). It is only when a bad secret is revealed that honesty becomes even remotely stirring; hence the adjectives “brutal,”

“unnerving,” “appalling,” and “searing” in modifying the honesty of *Intimacy*.

“Searingly honest,” as the novel’s front flap describes him, Jay confesses to “hav[ing] lied to you [Susan] and betrayed you everyday” by being unfaithful to Susan, both physically and emotionally. Instead of feeling guilty, however, Jay uncovers the value of lying, saying that it “protects all of us” (104). It is “a kindness to lie,” Jay proclaims, insofar as lying “keeps the important going” (Ibid.). That is to say, deception is necessary to “avoid hurting people” (Kipnis 2003; 127). Jay’s sarcastic question, “If I’ve been good, who’d have been impressed? God?” undermines the absolute goodness of the Good and invites the reader to embrace lying as sometimes something “better.”¹³

It is true that liars and infidels, “the outlaw, the femme fatale, the heretic, the double agent” (Phillips 1996)—and if I may add, the adulterer—have all the action. They have “the glamour of the bad secret and the good life” (Ibid.), whereas monogamy can never be made glamorous. Through lying, we can encounter that which resides outside of the domestic, which domesticates the new, the better, the unknown, and the infinite. Kipnis considers this treatment of the domestic of monogamous coupledness as “a private enclave of authenticity set apart from ordinary social falseness and superficialities” (2003; 127) to be preposterous. While every socialized being knows that a certain amount of lying is “fundamental to collective existence,” the premise of coupledness commands that “we don’t lie to our intimates” (126). This dictate of coupledness, of course, goes against our fidelity to our many-faced desires:

Wanting two things at once is, after all, the topography of the Freudian psyche. We're split selves...no matter how they're beaten into submission by socialization and its internal thugs, guilt and self-punishment. Having more than one desire may be modern intimacy's biggest taboo, but cramming the entirety of a libido into those tight domestic confines and acquiescing to a world of pre-shrunk desires is, for some, also *self-betrayal*, in the fullest—that is, the most split and unreconciled—sense of the word “self.” (original italics 128)

Jay's parents are a good example of Kipnis' notion of self-betrayal: “They [Father and Mother] were loyal and faithful to one another. Disloyal and unfaithful to themselves” (44). To paraphrase, monogamous intimacy on the basis of absolute truth-telling lies in diametrical opposition to human desire, which is by no means monogamous and which, if it is to squeeze into monogamy, cannot do without lies—lies to one's own self as well as to one's partner. For all this baffling situation, Kureishi does not glorify lying as something intrinsically good; Jay “do[es]n't recommend” (103) lying and looks for “an ultimate value” (104) in truth-telling. What Jay objects to is the wholesale denigration of individualistic values, involving lying, flirting, following desire, not reproducing, and embarrassing the self and others, that is, of any morally suspicious acts which are disparaged for their sacrilege against the Truth, marriage, family, and human decency, but with which there is nothing inherently wrong or horrible, other than that they are too unwieldy for civilized society to manage. Jay's endorsement of lying in *Intimacy* proposes an ethic of betrayal, not because it aims at becoming another fixed moral law, but because it continually puts into question moralistic binaries, hoping to come up with something better in the process. As Jay quotes from Thom Gunn's poem, “One is always nearer by not keeping still” (21). This spirit of movement, transformation, and

yearning for more and better (intimacy) is the foundation of an ethics of betrayal powerfully posed in *Intimacy*.

Along with truth and intimacy, love is another abstract word that has no concrete signifieds, “no nuance, no degrees,” yet is “always true” (Barthes 148). While philosophers on the discourse of love in the last generation, notably Barthes and Julia Kristeva, underscore the impossibility of the “system of love” (Barthes 211) and of the language of love, which is “polyvalent, undecidable, infinite” (Kristeva 383), the recent discourse of love focuses on categorizing it under different names. What proves lamentable is that most of these names, including romantic love, conjugal love, adulterous passion, mischievous desire, sneaky lust, and the dominant ideology of love (“our culture’s patent medicine for every ill” [Kipnis 93]), can be neatly hierarchized in relation to their proximity to connubial affection and faithfulness: the only legitimate form of love now.¹⁴

In order to conclude this chapter with an explication of *Intimacy*’s radical breakup with the potent paradigm of marriage, I would like to introduce Michael Cobb’s notion of the single who, in the age of “the steel, enduring logic of the couple” (449), wants to “relate to others outside of the supreme logic of the couple” (455). Cobb argues that marriage, “serious political and cultural business,” has become the “life in itself—life in which important feelings and work are permitted to be accomplished” (451). Desperate for this “life” and ready for “toxic forms of sociality” (447), we cannot be without love. But the result is that “there’s really too much touch, too much pressing, to be truly moved or excited” (454). Distinguished from what Cobb calls a “forced

intimacy” (450), Jay hopes to gain a “tender and complete intimacy” (59) that he longs for through an “art of solitude”: the “pleasures of not speaking, doing or wanting, but of losing oneself” (40). Jay’s final departure from the institution of monogamous intimacy looks forward to “the pleasures of being a single man in London” (12). Jay betrays the logic of coupledness in order to live a life of the flirtatious single, oscillating between “too close” and “too far” but never settling down on marriage or adultery. In place of “closeness” and “crowdedness” promoted in the name of love at the expense of distance and awe, Cobb suggests that we take a break from “that needy sex” and intimacy for “much-needed sleep” and “dream” (456). Finally freed from marital and familial ideologies masked as norms, *Intimacy*’s last imaginary passage on the “best of everything...love” (118) displays none other than Jay’s dream in his restful sleep. By moving out of the tenacious old story of marriage and adultery for the sake of a new story of uncommitted desire, *Intimacy* pictures a compelling ethic of betrayal, whose ethical value springs from its challenge to the consensual Good assumed in monogamy and its constant pursuit of “better” modes of intimacy.

CHAPTER III

TREASON IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *FURY*

While one reviewer sarcastically comments that *Fury* “sounds more interesting in synopsis than it actually is to read” (J. Leonard 36), Rushdie’s novel resists a coherent synopsis. The novel revolves around Malik Solanka, 55-year-old former Cambridge professor of ideas turned into a doll maker. Solanka creates a beautiful and smart doll named Little Brain, host of a BBC talk show featuring philosopher dolls such as Spinoza, Machiavelli, and Galileo. After Little Brian becomes an unprecedented global hit and “tawdry celebrity” (98), Solanka becomes disillusioned by Little Brain’s sellout to global consumerism, develops a murderous fury towards his English wife and the world, and relocates himself in exile in Manhattan. Two major events occur in Manhattan. First, Solanka starts an affair with the traffic-stopping Indian beauty Neela Mahendra. A cosmopolite from an imaginary island Lilliput-Blefuscu, loosely based on Fiji, Neela is modeled after Padma Lakshmi, a real life Indian model and host of the popular American TV show *Top Chef*. Lakshmi started dating Rushdie in 1999 and became his fourth wife in 2004 (ex-wife in 2007), and is the dedicatee of *Fury*. Second, Solanka launches an Internet saga at PlanetGalileo.com, relating a galactic battle between cybernetic Puppet Kings and their human master. The digital story of the “PKs” instantly becomes an interdisciplinary entrepreneurial success worldwide. In the novel’s last chapter, however, Solanka returns to London, howling “the cry of the tormented and the lost” (259), when Neela kills herself in a political coup in Lilliput-

Blefuscu, and when Solanka witnesses the revolutionary puppets of his creation being misleadingly handled by fanatical nationalists in Lilliput-Blefuscu.

In crisscrossing boundaries of the real/fictional/virtual, national/global/planetary, and textual/intertextual/extra-textual, Rushdie's "shortest" novel to date condenses disparate themes, settings, and tones deemed incompatible and extravagant even in a Rushdie novel. It has been received furiously. According to reviewers, Rushdie's *Fury* is "signifying nothing" (Anonymous; D. Mendelsohn; Patterson and Valby), is written by a "trivial monster-ego" (qtd. in Tonkin 2001), and "exhausts all negative superlatives" (Wood 2001). Amitava Kumar notes that Rushdie is "utterly complicit in what he wants to lampoon" (35), thus pointing out Rushdie's lack of critical distance in portraying Manhattan's cultural politics—the culture of "celebrification" (Brouillette 154)—that this novel condemns and reinforces simultaneously. In other words, Rushdie's satire of the culture of celebrification remains powerless, insofar as the author takes too much pleasure in describing what he purports to denigrate.¹

Similarly, other critics find it difficult to pin down *Fury*, and label it a "failed" postcolonial novel, because it abandons the center/margin distinction assumed in postcolonial discourse, or a "failed" postmodern novel, an example of "junk lit" (Gonzalez, "The Aesthetics" 126) adorned with superficial exuberance. Anuradha Bhattacharyya's essay exemplifies the first reading frame as it reproduces the duped Indian versus the manipulative Western paradigm. Bhattacharyya brands Rushdie/Solanka as an "Indian adopting a western theory as a garb" (153). Deploring Rushdie/Solanka's "unconscious attraction towards the West" (Ibid.), Bhattacharyya

argues that Rushdie/Solanka “wears a mask” because of the “lack of confidence in his Indianness” (154).² From the perspective of postmodernism, Madelena Gonzalez argues that the “celebratory aesthetics of magic realism” in Rushdie’s early work has given way to the “rampant technophilia of postrealism” in *Fury* (189). While the meaning of “postrealism” is unclear, Gonzalez critiques Rushdie’s novel as mimicking “the trashy technobeat of contemporary McCulture” (“Artistic *Fury*” 767).³

What I find more fruitful for the purpose of this chapter is another group of critics who read *Fury* as representing an “American cosmopolitanism.” If *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie’s greatest contribution to postcolonial and world literature, mediates the discourse of “the *trans* and the *post*,” the postmodern valorization of “mobility, mutability, and newness,” and a discourse of the “*re*,” “return and restoration” (Gane 26) valorizing continuity, stability, and identity, these critics argue that *Fury* has lost sight of the tension between these two discourses. Instead, Rushdie “has written himself into the center...the multicultural mainstream of the US” in *Fury*: hence an “Americanization of Rushdie” (Kunow 369). Yet, this narrow notion of cosmopolitanism as an Americanization of global elites, like the postcolonial and the postmodernist interpretations, cannot fully illuminate *Fury*’s ambivalence towards America, that which a frustrated critic calls the “equivocation” (Keulks 162) of *Fury*.

This chapter attempts to enlarge the discourse of cosmopolitanism in order to make room for what I call “radical cosmopolitanism.” I define radical cosmopolitanism as a type of non-allegiance that deconstructs an idyllic rendition of cosmopolitanism and that refuses to commit to either cosmopolitanism or nationalism. *Fury*’s chronic

ambivalence and equivocation, then, do not stem from the lack of critical positioning, but indicate a strategic complication on the issue of cosmopolitanism and nationalism as valid critical discourses. That is to say, rather than mediating “migrant and national” (Spivak 1993; 219) as Rushdie’s earlier works do, this novel illustrates the extent to which discourses of both cosmopolitanism and nationalism are saturated by media-frenzied and celebrity-obsessed cultural politics. I argue that *Fury*, a novel about Manhattan’s celebrity culture, is a cosmopolitan novel *par excellence*, not because it endorses American cosmopolitanism, but because it reveals cosmopolitanism and nationalism as false ideologies concocted by an American empire and, in renouncing allegiance to both, embodies a radical cosmopolitanism.

If postcolonial, postmodernist, and elitist cosmopolitan readings turn out to be ineffective in explaining *Fury*’s “inexplicable” (9) contradictions, it is because this novel is less interested in negotiating positions between margin/periphery, postmodernist /realist, and cosmopolitan/ nationalist, than it is dedicated to questioning such binaries *per se*. Rushdie’s emphasis on “contradictions,” “excess,” and “uncertainties”—some of the most reiterated words in *Fury*—earns him the name of traitor and accusations of having become an elite liberalist and assimilationist who shows less interest in committing to meaningful global or national causes than in chasing his personal success. As Rebecca Walkowitz argues, however, Rushdie’s seemingly insincere styles entailing irreverent thinking, flirtation, and mixing-up are “ethical or subversive” for they “extend perception, make it more various,” (18), and “offer an alternative to the opposition between accommodation and antagonism” (133). In the same way, *Fury*’s play with

contradictions does not aim at judgment or resolution, but creates room for the new and “better” by shaking up existent categories. Herein lies an ethic of betrayal inspired by *Fury*’s act of treason against cosmopolitanism and nationalism.

The first part of this chapter begins with a discussion of prior criticism on *Fury* in the light of American cosmopolitanism. If American cosmopolitanism connotes an elitist position of non-belonging, work on cosmopolitanism since the 1990s stresses the need to be attentive to local communities and the sense of national belonging dismissed by the advocates of (economic) globalization. Borrowing from Pheng Cheah’s thinking, I would argue that the current discourse of cosmopolitanism runs a risk of becoming a form of idealistic philosophizing. Cheah explicates that cosmopolitan theorists share a utopian assumption of cosmopolitan culture as the site of “the autonomy of human existence” (95) free from the Capital. In contrast, I draw on Fredric Jameson’s dystopian vision of a “world culture” dominated by the American market, and illustrate the detrimental working of celebrity culture, which turns both cosmopolitanism and nationalism into political commodities in *Fury*. Rushdie’s novel is a felicitous portrayal of the world culture fostered by the American empire. The latter part of this chapter demonstrates how *Fury* challenges this cultural empire of America via two examples, Solanka’s eloquent defense of “messy humanity” (74), and Neela’s recantation of her ethnic loyalty. In *Other Asias*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak cogently remarks: “The ethico-politico task of the humanities has always been rearrangement of desires” (3). An embodiment of a treacherous yet transvaluating desire in defiance of the American

empire, *Fury*'s betrayal of (inter)national loyalty constitutes an ethical project that looks forward to political transformation.

Cosmopolitanism *Post-Festum*

If the postcolonial and the postmodernist critics of *Fury* lament Rushdie's desertion of the postcolonial and his crossing over to a "tabloid celebrity" (Kumar 36), other critics deprecate Rushdie's novel as an endorsement of "American cosmopolitanism" (Mondal 181). In "The Architect of Cosmopolitan Dream," Rüdiger Kunow argues that *Fury* epitomizes a carefree cosmopolitanism with a non-committal view from above. Less a victim suffering from globalization than a global elite profiting from it, Rushdie has left diaspora and has integrated himself to mainstream America. Similarly, Anshuman Mondal states that Rushdie's aesthetics of excess has become an aestheticization of hyperbole in *Fury*. Rushdie's style aptly describes today's "fragmented cultures" and its "obsession with surfaces where style is more important than substance" (176). Given Rushdie's own status as a global literary celebrity sustained by popular US media, Mondal notes that his hyperbole causes *Fury* to be complicit to "the vacuous empire of signs" (Ibid.)—the very object of Solanka's criticism towards glossy yet fatuous Manhattan—rather than being critical of it. In consequence, Rushdie's novel vacates the political in favor of the aesthetical. Mondal concludes: "What had been a political act now becomes an existential fact...a species of cosmopolitanism, more philosophical, a world without frontiers" (181). If Mondal argues that *Fury*'s philosophical turn to cosmopolitanism signifies the loss of transformative power in the sociopolitical field, my

contention is that *Fury* struggles to find new ways of changing society in a post-political age. When the division between nationalists and cosmopolites, Right and Left, and “us” and “them” is not clear-cut, and when both parties are guided by self-interests and the Capital (hence the “post-political”), Rushdie’s novel destabilizes postmodern America by tackling its ethos, Manhattanites’ avid pursuit of “hip” -isms as lifestyle choices. From this view, Rushdie’s turn to cosmopolitanism has less to do with a blind celebration of it than with a deconstruction of it, its fascination and perilousness.⁴

According to Mondal, an American cosmopolitanism embraced by *Fury* glorifies “non-belonging” as “broad-minded global pluralism,” and disparages “belonging” as “narrow chauvinism” (181). Kunow’s and Mondal’s use of American cosmopolitanism, however, reflects an outdated mode of it as a privileged position of non-belonging and mobility. In order to expand on the discourse of cosmopolitanism and to trace what I view as the radical cosmopolitanism of *Fury*, an update to emerging theories of cosmopolitanism since the 1990s is necessary. The term “cosmopolitanism” was coined by the Stoics in the fourth century B.C. as denoting the “citizen of the world” (Fine and Cohen 137) and a “meeting of minds” (138), and was theorized by Immanuel Kant as a normative philosophy and social theory in the late eighteenth century, when European nationalism was at its culmination.⁵ Cosmopolitanism has resurfaced recently as an area of academic inquiry following the lost causes of multiculturalism and globalization.⁶ Be they invested in a philosophical ideal of “a spaceless cosmopolitanism of the mind” (Fine and Cohen 158), or in a critical social theory struggling for global democracy and alliance-making, the latest theories of cosmopolitanism emphasize the need to mediate

the global/local binary. If an encyclopedia entry to “cosmopolite” in 1953 labels it “a selfish individual,” whom “fortune has relieved from the immediate struggle for existence...and who can afford to indulge [his] fads and enthusiasms” (Ibid.), major theorists of the field since the 1990s agree on the exigency to be wary of this obsolete and narrow notion of cosmopolitanism as a privileged position of non-belonging and mobility, and to be equally attentive to local communities and the sense of national belonging. The core achievement of the current discourse of cosmopolitanism thus lies in its presumed ability to negotiate two opposite sets of values: homogeneity, identity, unity, and universality on the one hand, and heterogeneity, difference, multiplicity-hybridity, and specificity on the other.

Some of the terms conceived by the scholars of cosmopolitanism illuminate the need for such mediation. Kwame Anthony Appiah’s “partial cosmopolitanism” eliminates “an unpleasant posture of superiority toward the putative provincial” (xiii), and merges the respect for “universal concern” and the “legitimate difference” (xv) of humanity. Stuart Hall’s “vernacular cosmopolitanism” recognizes “the importance of community and culture...[while] acknowledging the liberal limit on communitarianism” (30). Hall argues that while it is important to understand the limitation of one community or identity in writing one’s life, one’s communities still matter in that they “continue to be what you are” (Ibid.). “Vernacular cosmopolitanism” stresses this dynamic between communities, because “[y]ou could not be what you are without that struggle both to defend them and to exit from them” (Ibid.). Walter Mignolo polarizes between what he calls “global designs”—the “managerial” globalization from above

“driven by the will to control and homogenize” (157)—and a “critical and dialogic cosmopolitanism,” which can be “complementary or dissenting,” springing from “the various spatial and historical locations of the colonial difference” (179). Mignolo’s other term for his cosmopolitan project, “diversality,” expresses the importance of diversity in the universal project of cosmopolitanism. Similarly, Ulrich Beck opposes an “*economic* globalization,” which promotes the homogenous “idea of the global market” and “the virtues of neoliberal economic growth,” to “*cosmopolitanization*,” which develops “multiple loyalties as well as the increase in diverse transnational forms of life” (original italics 9). Rebecca Walkowitz’s “*critical* cosmopolitanism” also seeks for a mode of cosmopolitanism that debunks “epistemological privilege, views from above or from the center” (original italics 2), but that is “nevertheless specific and collective” (144).⁷

A list of the names of the theorists who attempt to redefine cosmopolitanism without erasing the local and the specific, including Saskia Sassen, James Clifford, and Spivak, and the list of the terms invented by them, such as Clifford’s “discrepant cosmopolitanisms” (qtd. in Cheah 82), “critical regionalism” (Spivak; 2008 1), and “cosmopolitan nationhood” (Fine and Cohen 161), is too long to enumerate. While the necessity of a successful mediation between global/local, universal/specific, and the self/Other proves an undisputable task of cosmopolitanism today, the question of how to achieve this mediation in reality remains difficult to answer. As Pheng Cheah cogently remarks, despite people’s increased sense of belonging to the world, cosmopolitanism has not “resulted in a significant sense of political allegiance or loyalty to the world”

(107). This is because, contrary to the “notoriously nonphilosophical or underintellectualized” nationalism, cosmopolitanism lacks “a mass base of loyalty” (108) that the nation has. To rephrase using Beck’s words, patriotism is “one-sided and petty” but is “practical, useful, joyous and comforting,” whereas cosmopolitanism is “splendid, large, but for a human being almost too large” (1). In this sense, the neat symmetry within cosmopolitanism, its dialectical movement between Identity and Difference, may be “in the end just a beautiful idea” (Ibid.), reminiscent of Hegelian dialectic idealism towards the unapproachable Synthesis, that which Hegel calls the “Absolute Knowing” in the last chapter of *Phenomenology of Spirit*. It is little wonder that “political theorists” find cosmopolitanism’s aspiration, its attempt at “the combination of equality and difference,” simply “impossible” (Hall 30).

Cosmopolitanism’s “impossible” (from the perspective of political theorists) agenda reminds me of Mondal’s accusation against *Fury* that the novel’s turn to philosophical cosmopolitanism signifies the loss of political practice. As Appiah notes in his introduction to *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, “philosophers rarely write really useful books” (xx). For me, the power of philosophy, particularly a poststructuralist philosophy that I find useful in reading *Fury*, lies less in utility and practicality than in thought-provoking equivocations. Living off of “the surplus value of problematization,” philosophical meditation does not aim to “answer the question,” “resolve the problem,” and “end philosophy” (Goodchild 2000; 43). Rather, philosophy’s virtue consists in leaving the question unresolved, so as to rethink it and to encounter something “unthinkable or impossible at the heart of thought” (Ibid.). This is

why I am less interested in “answering” judgmental, dichotomized either/or questions than in making them more difficult to answer. I find the current discourse of cosmopolitanism, particularly its preoccupation with the parity between globalism and locality, worth investigating not because of the (im)plausibility of such parity, but precisely to the extent to that theories of cosmopolitanism uncover the longing for seemingly incongruous values in this interdependent and transnational world: longing for such incompatible values as home, stability, and agency, and complete freedom from any geographical, communitarian, and ideological perimeters.

My thesis that cosmopolitanism counts less as a political theory than as a receptacle of the philosophical yearning for Identity *and* Difference demonstrates itself in the idyllic rendition of culture in two different cosmopolitan theories. On the one hand, Kant categorizes cosmopolitan culture as a “universally normative ideal” (Cheah 81) *a priori*: the canonical concept of culture as the “universal normative validity” (83). On the other hand, theorists of postcolonial hybridity represented by James Clifford and Homi Bhabha argue that the Kantian canonical view of culture as “an organic and coherent body, a process of ordering, and a bounded realm of human value determinable by and coextensive with human reason” (Ibid.), is utterly Eurocentric and “violent.” Instead, culture is nothing but “syncretism and parodic invention” (Ibid.): hence the Bhabhaian terms, “mimicry and ambivalence” (84). “Hybrid, inorganic, and indeterminate” (Ibid.), culture has been constructed in the permanent encounters and contestations between the histories of local and global, best illustrated by “working-class traveling culture” (87). According to Clifford, the “diasporic and migrant cultures” of

servants, guides, and translators are “cosmopolitan, radical, political,” and constitute a “valuable critique of ‘the organic, naturalizing bias of the term culture’” (Ibid.). Yet Cheah argues that hybridity theorists’ attempt to “recosmopolitanize postcolonial studies” (89) reinforces the utopian notion of culture implied in Kant’s cosmopolitan world order. If Kant’s view of culture as “the promise of humanity’s freedom from or control over the given” (97) shores up his cosmopolitanism, hybridity theorists’ assumption of migrant culture as “the human realm of flux and freedom from the bondage of being-in-nature, and its understanding of national culture as an ideological or naturalized constraint to be overcome” (89), is as idyllic as Kant’s.

The utopian concept of culture shared by a wide range of cosmopolitan theorists would be diametrically opposed by Fredric Jameson’s dystopian vision of “world culture.” Contrary to the scholars of cosmopolitanism, who distinguish globalization and cosmopolitanization as “affecting different spheres of life (economic vs. socio-cultural)” (Schoene 1), Jameson’s essay on globalization underscores “the becoming cultural of the economic, the becoming economic of the cultural” (1998; 60). The inseparableness of the cultural and the economic is that which Jameson articulates as the logic of the world culture dominated by an American “ideology” called “free market” (63). Under the rubric of world culture, allegedly democratic yet highly discriminatory, “all the cultures around the world...placed in tolerant contact with each other in a kind of immense cultural pluralism” are soon to be followed by “the rapid assimilation of hitherto autonomous national markets and productive zones into...a picture of standardization on an unparalleled new scale,” as well as into a “world-system from

which ‘delinking’ is henceforth impossible and even unthinkable and inconceivable” (57). For instance, Jameson argues that exported Northamerican television programs and the Hollywood film industry make a “cultural intervention...deeper than anything known in earlier forms of colonization or imperialism, or simple tourism” (58). For this cultural neo-imperialism, which obliterates the line between the cultural and the economic through the commodification of *every* cultural production, counts on the rhetoric of freedom, not only of free trade but of “the free passage of ideas and intellectual ‘properties’” (60), such as copyright and patent, thus turning “ideas” into “private property ...designed to be sold in great and profitable quantities” (61). Jameson concludes that in the current global “free” market of culture, it is within the American system that the world culture emerges by incorporating “exotic elements from abroad—samurai culture here, South African music there, John Woo film here, Thai food there, and so forth” (63).

In deconstructing the idealistic notion of culture, deemed by cosmopolitan theorists as the site of human freedom and agency, into the dominant world culture, Jameson’s discussion of world culture uncovers America’s financial encroachment of the cultural and suggests a post-structuralist reading of cosmopolitanism. I argue that this deconstructed concept of cosmopolitanism can provide a fruitful theoretical frame for reading *Fury*, insofar as the novel presents a rich portrayal of the Jamesonian world culture based in America. As I mention before in this chapter, *Fury* is less interested in negotiating positions between margin/periphery, postmodernist/humanist, and cosmopolitan/national, than is dedicated to problematizing such binaries. Kunow uses a

term “*site-polygamous*” (371) in order to indicate Rushdie’s shift from his earlier work to *Fury*, from postcolonial to cosmopolitan author writing from “different sites of representation, with the Ramayana, Urdu poetry, Shakespeare, and Hollywood” (381). Kunow is correct in noting that *Fury* treats none of these sites as “privileged” but all of them as “provisional” (Ibid.), but my argument is that Rushdie’s novel offers more than a representation of democratized cosmopolitan diversity. That is, *Fury* rejects commitment to any “sites” so as to reveal the vicious working of the current Empire of world culture, a mode of non-allegiance I read as constituting a radical cosmopolitanism.

Some of the most reiterated words in *Fury* are “betrayal,” “traitor(ess),” “infidelity,” and “treason,” which occur on a daily basis among fame-seeking and money-mad Manhattanites with divided loyalties. In addition to marital infidelity that is too commonplace, Solanka “silently admit[s]” that his relationship with Neela amounts to the “betrayal” (185) of his friendship with Jack. Solanka calls Little Brain “betrayers” for the doll’s treachery of her creator’s intention and dubs his wife, Eleanor, “betrayers” (107) for her refusal to destroy the prototype “LB.” Solanka’s Puppet Kings story and Babur’s revolution in Lilliput-Blefuscu mimicking the PK story explore the righteousness of treason. In displaying all spectra of betrayals from brutal backstabbing to moralist indignation to what I call an “ethical treason,” Rushdie’s novel uncovers at once the rampancy of subversive human desires, and the need to tell them apart in order to recognize ethical potentials of some of them to open up for the better. Neela’s recantation of her ethnic loyalty and her seduction of Babur to their joint deaths in the

penultimate chapter of *Fury* would best exemplify an ethical treason, which embodies an ethical desire in critiquing the violence of Babur's nationalist ideology.

In conclusion, this chapter explores the significance of *Fury*'s tragic and puzzling ending, in which Solanka, returning from Lilliput-Blefuscu after Neela's suicide, is bouncing on the "bouncy castle" reaching for sky and calling out his son's name Asmaan—"sky" in Urdu—in vain. As Tonkin comments that the reviewers of the novel "don't appear to have read to the end" (2001), *Fury*'s ending has been curiously ignored by commentators. If cosmopolitans are those who feel "at home in all countries of the world" (Beck 4), Solanka feels homeless everywhere he goes in the novel, literally with no "ground beneath his feet" on the bouncy castle at the end. I will first illuminate the futility of the Sisyphus-like human endeavor of challenging the cultural Empire implied in Solanka's eternal bouncing, and then argue that this bouncing fated to falling nevertheless invokes an odd sense of hope and catharsis, not unlike a Dionysian-Nietzschean tragedy filled with violent rapture.⁸ Despite the profound sense of defeat, Solanka's struggle to leave the Empire provides once again the hope for a cosmopolitanism beyond any commodified isms, declaring his "will to cosmopolitanism."

Radical Cosmopolitanism: On Abandoning Allegiance

Before analyzing the text of *Fury*, it is worth noting the ways in which Solanka's story mirrors Rushdie's personal life. Not only do most of the critical works on Rushdie's novel, wittingly or not, use the names of its protagonist and the novelist without

distinction, but a significant number of reviewers pinpoint the very lack of distinction between them as a main reason for the novel's failure.⁹ When I argue the need to distinguish Solanka from Rushdie, my goal is not to pursue a New Critical methodology of the New Criticism that removes the roles of the author and history. My suggestion is that the focus should not be on perusing how closely, for example, Neela's character copies Lakshmi's life, but on examining the parts of the novel that do not directly mirror Rushdie's life. It is true that Neela has a scar of exactly the same shape on her arm as Lakshmi does, but the more helpful finding would be what purpose Neela's return to her roots and her death serve in *Fury*, a tragic event that is not obviously inspired by reality. This is not to say that the reader should disregard the palimpsest of Rushdie in *Fury*. Written by a literary celebrity, winner of the Booker of the Man Booker Prize and longtime buddy of the U2 singer Bono, *Fury* features numerous fictional and real-life celebrities, and creates an online novel-within-the-novel that is highly self-referential of the print novel. Instead of dismissing *Fury* as displaying too much of the author's ego, the reader will benefit from viewing *Fury* as "not about Rushdie's life, but about 'Rushdie' as brand name, as paratext, and as icon" (Brouillette 151). Sarah Brouillette argues that *Fury*'s "solipsism" as opposed to the postcolonial context of Rushdie's earlier work betrays its "obsession with the status of its author within the literary marketplace that endlessly celebrates, consecrates and derides him" (154). For instance, the meanings of Solanka's digital tale of revolutionary Puppet Kings are determined regardless of the author, commodified by global publishing companies, and appropriated by inconsiderate fans and politicians, reflecting Rushdie's "anxiety about the

impossibility of authoring the *political meaning* of his own works” (Ibid.). Rushdie’s writing has become, Brouillette argues, “the most tantalizing political commodities for various consumer groups, from postcolonial critics in Western universities to religious leaders in the Islamic world” today (Ibid.). As some recent titles of newspaper/magazine articles on Rushdie’s exciting personal life as a global celebrity suggest, it seems difficult, even pointless, to discern the “authentic” literary Rushdie from the celebrity Rushdie in order to assess his work.¹⁰ What will be more productive is to examine the degree to which Rushdie’s entertaining description of the celebrity culture in *Fury* impinges on his criticism of the same culture. In Brouillette’s words, “There is no such thing as non-involvement and the only option one has is to be complicitous with celebrification while constantly questioning the nature and implications of that involvement” (154). Rushdie’s novel urges the reader to continuously question the nature of cosmopolitanism, nationalism, American consumerism, and romantic love without moralistic judgment or uncritical celebration.

Above all, *Fury*’s thought-provoking ambivalence presents itself in the novel’s attitude toward the cosmopolites overflowing this novel. Manhattan at the turn of the third millennium as painted by Rushdie makes a perfect vessel for all kinds of cosmopolitans. No matter what reasons they have for their enforced or chosen world-traveling and relocating, they fill the city with their vivid “back-story” (51). In addition to main characters such as the green-eyed Serbo-Croatian Mila, Polish-British Waterford-Wajda, and Neela, American of Indian and Lilliput-Blefuscu descents, a list of minor cosmopolitan characters of the novel includes: the old grumpy plumber Joseph

Schlink, “a transplanted German Jew” (47) from World War II, who has a back-story of the “*Jewboat*” and wins a movie contract starring Billy Crystal; Wisława, Solanka’s overbearing Polish housekeeper, exerts “the dangerous, unsuppressable power of the tale” (49) on her “master”; Ali Majnu, a cab-driver, blasphemes America in Urdu; and another Pole Bronisława Reinhart and the English Sara Jane Lear are ex-wives of celebrities and participants in “the Divorce Olympics” (213), who fiercely compete for alimony and fame with “the sticking power of a leech” (54). From Solanka himself, “a born-and-bred metropolitan of the countryside-is-for-cows persuasion” (6), to “Jamaican troubadour-polemicists...in Bryant Park” (7), *Fury*’s portrait of Manhattan stands for ultimate urbanity, the seething site of freedom and opportunity crossing the boundaries of elite and underclass, and the nation and the world.

In an interview with *Publishers Weekly*, Rushdie observes that New York City is a place in which “people are constantly arriving and adding to the city in their own ways” (Steinberg). In an uncharacteristically modest tone, Rushdie expresses his intention in writing *Fury*: “As an informed outsider...I thought I’d add one brick to that edifice.” Yet the “one brick” Rushdie provides in *Fury* is not an addition to the democratized variety of urban cosmopolitans, designating a harmonious coexistence of the peoples beyond class, race, and nationality. To the contrary, Rushdie’s novel demonstrates that the Metropolis, oftentimes a site of mirth and enrichment, makes an equally powerful site of forgetting and burying of individuals. Running away from the impulse to murder his wife, Eleanor, Solanka is initially attracted to Manhattan for this very power of anonymity that the megacity can bestow upon its members: “Bathe me in

amnesia and clothe me in your powerful unknowing. Enlist me in your J. Crew and hand me my mouse ears! No longer a historian but a man without histories let me be” (51).

But the violent turn that this monologue takes—“I’ll rip my lying mother tongue out of my throat and speak your broken English instead” (Ibid.)—evokes Solanka’s sarcasm and fury at witnessing the burial of the specific, significant histories of cosmopolites (especially émigrés and the underclass) in the celebratory name of globalization and of its sole *lingua franca*, (broken) English.

Solanka’s indignation, however, should not be interpreted as a systematic critique from a postcolonial and critical race theory perspective. For comparison: Bhattacharyya notes that Solanka’s “extreme sense of disgust and humiliation” towards his African-American friend Jack Reinhart exposes “his displeasure at the coloured man’s ‘image’ in a predominantly white man’s society” (159). In contrast, *Fury*’s ferocious speeches, often making fun of themselves by “mixing up” scathing criticism with the lexicon of American consumerism (“Enlist me in your J. Crew”), do not divide between “white” and “coloured,” not to mention between “normal,” “bad,” “colonizer,” and “abnormal,” “good,” “colonized,” assumed in the white/colored opposition. Instead, *Fury*’s cosmopolites illustrate Rushdie’s use of “eclecticism, flirtation, courtship, nicknaming, and strategic assimilation” (138), the elements of what Walkowitz calls Rushdie’s “cosmopolitan style.” Neither “an uncommitted cosmopolitanism, belonging to nowhere at all, nor a cosmopolitanism committed to everywhere” (Ibid), Walkowitz argues that Rushdie’s work engenders a cosmopolitan style of “mixing things up.” Rushdie’s mix-up aims to stop reproducing “the proper” and “the good” underwritten in

racism and to show “the violence of correctness” (149) that racism exerts in the name of morality. Although Walkowitz’s focus is on *The Satanic Verses* and *East/West*, her arguments that racism is a “system of moral distinctions” (139) and that Rushdie’s work disrupts “‘the shared standpoint’ about the good” (146) are instrumental to understanding *Fury*’s cosmopolitan style. By conjoining different styles—eloquent rhetoric and an “improper” pop lexicon—and by complicating the lives of cosmopolites with unexpected turns and twists (Schlink’s movie deal, for example), *Fury* shows little interest in generating a good, “model cosmopolitan” in terms of race, class, or nationality. Rather, Rushdie’s novel reveals how the histories of immigrants are often erased, (re)created, or distorted in the service of a commodified metropolitan culture.

If Schlink’s dramatic turn of life is at once implausible, problematic, yet hilarious, the life and death of Krysztof Waterford-Wajda, a.k.a. “Dubdub,” exemplifies the tragedy of the elite cosmopolitan. Solanka’s Cambridge friend, Dubdub is an “unlikely hybrid,” whose “upper-class grin, his [English] mother’s hockey-captain grin which no shadow of pain, poverty, or doubt had ever darkened,” sits “so incongruously below his paternal inheritance, the beetling, dark eye-brows reminiscent of untranslatable privations endured by his ancestors in the unglamorous town of Łódź” (19). Ideally situated between “the highbrow and the dross,” and “silver-spoon England and tin-cup Poland” (Ibid.), Dubdub is known for his lecture at Cambridge University, “*Cultiver Son Jardin*,” discussing Voltaire’s *Candide*, and for his “fundamentally good and open heart concealed beneath all the posh heehaw” (20). When Dubdub arrives at Princeton University for a chaired position “invented” for him, he becomes an academic

celebrity in the new “industry of culture replac[ing] that of ideology” (24). Given his hybridity and popularity, Dubdub, who happens to resemble “the mighty Frenchman,” is expected to easily adapt himself to “the world’s new secularism, [whose] new religion was fame” (Ibid.). But this “globe-trotting...Derridada!”, or its lookalike, is too good-hearted and conscientious to ignore the truth that “the more he became a Personality, the less like a person he felt” (27). Although Dubdub calls his thoughts “Pooh Bear philosophy” (103) for their naivety and banality, he lets himself be killed by clogged arteries after three failed suicide attempts, leaving a simple truth behind: “your life doesn’t belong to you” (27). Dubdub’s death occurring early in *Fury* presages the novel’s central theme of “thingification”: that is, the consumer culture’s turning of person into Personality, and life into Lifestyle. In a society where individuals are both consumers *and* objects of consumption, the segregation between the life of a Jewish plumber and of an internationally eminent scholar means little as long as a niche market can be found for both.

How is New York City, the life-altering and death-inducing city “boiled with money” (3), and with Personalities and Lifestyles, described in *Fury*? What would be the core, if extricable, of such a topsy-turvy metropolitan culture with “its hybrid, omnivorous power” (44)? Among other things, New York as depicted by Rushdie is a rich embodiment of late-capitalist excess and speed. Aptly conveyed in the breathless cataloging of “things,” such as “limited-edition olive oils, three-hundred-dollar corkscrews, customized Humvees, the latest anti-virus software...[and] waiting lists for baths, doorknobs, imported hardwoods, antiqued fireplaces, bidets, marble slabs” (3),

and the “cast-off clothing...the reject china and designer-label bargains” that those living in “the poorer latitudes...would have killed for” (6), America’s excessive wealth and decadence match past empires, although the current one is more “undeserving” and “crass” (87) than prior ones. Solanka believes that America is not entitled to the name of empire because this country, as the “melting pot or *métissage* of past power,” bases its might on “plundering and jumbling of the storehouse of yesterday’s empires” (43). This remark is triggered by a “garishly handsome” cornerstone dedicated “to Pythianism” (Ibid.). “Pythianism” is an “embarrassing” coinage yoking together clashing Greek and Mesopotamian metaphors. Another example of similar “jumbles” is “Caesar Joaquin Phoenix’s imperial Rome” (in the 2000 film *Gladiator*), which rules the city’s cultural scene, if only in “the computer-generated illusion of the great gladiatorial arena” (6). But this “most transient of cities’ eternal imitation game” culminates in the “Viennese *Kaffeehaus*,” “the city’s best simulacrum” (44): Solanka decides to call Manhattan a “city of half-truths and echoes that somehow dominates the earth” (Ibid.)

With no regard to historical authenticity or truth, the current empire spreads its tentacles with vehement velocity, transhistorically and transnationally. Some of the numerous examples of this “excessive postmodern rapidity” (228) are: “They’re inventing whole new media everyday” (178); “every year is the Stone Age to the year that follows” (177); and “the speed of contemporary life outstrip[s] the heart’s ability to respond” (228). Since what is not excessive and rapid cannot survive on the market, an inversion between normal and abnormal takes place: in Solanka’s words, “To live in

Metropolis was to know that the exceptional was as commonplace as diet soda, that abnormality was the popcorn norm” (39).

America’s penchant for the extreme, the stimulating, the grandiose, and the exotic does not stop at “plundering and jumbling” cultural archives. Upon seizing spoils, America labels them with “the American logo: American dream, American Buffalo, American Graffiti, American Psycho, American Tune” (55). While America’s need to “make things American, to own them,” primarily shows its “capitalist” nature, Solanka views such need also as “the mark of an odd insecurity” (56). The two-faced “Pax Americana” (74), its “public hedonism and private fear” (86), is graphically epitomized in the murders of three young “American” heiresses—Saskia “Sky” Schulyer, Lauren “Ren” Muybridge Klein, and Belinda “Bindy” Booken Candell. These girls’ luxurious yet empty life“styles,” plus their flawless looks, not only symbolize their dehumanized lives as “*living doll[s]*,” “trophyies,” and “Oscar-Barbies” (72), but personify America’s thinly veiled glamour as well:

But now living women wanted to be doll-like, to cross the frontier and look like toys. Now the doll was the original, the woman the representation. These living dolls, these stringless marionettes, not just “dolloed up” on the outside. Behind their high-style exteriors, beneath that perfectly lucent skin, they were so stuffed full of behavioral chips, so thoroughly programmed for action, so perfectly groomed and wardrobed, that there was no room left in them for messy humanity...Having conspired in their own dehumanization, they [Sky, Bindy, and Ren] ended up as mere totems of their class, that class that ran America, which in turn ran the world, so that an attack on them was also, if you cared to see it that way, an attack on the great American empire, the Pax Americana, itself. (74)

Since the murderers turn out to be the three scalped girls’ equally rich and young boyfriends, members of the secret “S&M Club (single and male),” Solanka interprets the

three murders as symptomatic of “the death of the heart” (202). For those three young men, for whom love is a question of “violence and possession, of doing and being done to,” are able to acquire everything but “lessness, ordinariness. Real life” (Ibid.).

In *Other Asias*, Spivak states that one can use the terms “colonizer” and “colonized” when “an alien nation-state established itself as ruler, impressing its own laws and systems of education, and re-arranging the mode of production for its own economic benefit” (6). The American empire in *Fury*, however, does not have to “establish itself as ruler.” Far from forcing its system through military might as previous colonizers did, America entices the world with appealing, consumer-oriented commodities, revamped from global cultural archives, so that people from all over the world *voluntarily* move to America for a better education or for better living without being “impressed”—hence the term “neo-colonialism,” or “cultural imperialism,” for the seemingly “optional” worldwide rule of American system.

Fury manifests this very contradictory working inherent in American imperialism, its seduction and damage. As *Fury*’s narration of the murders shows, Rushdie’s writing shines more when describing the decadent and extravagant lifestyles of the three girls than when accounting for the sentimental and didactic explanation of the murder mystery, “the death of the heart.” In an interview with *Wall Street Journal*, Rushdie reveals his favor of “excess” and “decadence” (Rosett). Not used to being “normal,” Rushdie opines that he loves New York City because “we’re all abnormal” in that city. I do not argue that *Fury* is nothing but an exact portrait of its author’s love of decadent New York. What I argue is the need to scrutinize how Solanka is both seduced

and repelled by the same city. In many parts of the novel, Solanka offers a compelling critique on American popular culture (and its portentous apocalypse), complaining, for example, about “a spurt of gross-out dumb-and-dumber comedies designed for young people who sat in darkness howling their ignorance at the silver screen” (87). At the same time, Solanka calls New York City “the great World-City” (86) and “the only game in town” (88), acknowledging: “Yes, it had seduced him, America; yes, its brilliance aroused him, and its vast potency too” (87). Solanka’s love-hate reaction to America displays the effectiveness of the neo-imperialist strategy, which subjugates individuals-consumers not by force, but by catering to their tastes.

Rushdie’s attraction to and disgust with American culture are amply testified to by his incorporation of pop culture references into the novel. Pop culture references in *Fury* are too many to list in detail. In terms of the “quality” of reference, they are not uniformly well-used; some of them are ingenious while others are cloying, trite, or downright vulgar. Solanka’s creation, Little Brain, once made a “real life” celebrity, moves to “Brain Street” in “Brainville,” neighboring a movie star “John Brayne,” having a lab called “Brain Drain,” starring in *Brain Street* (96) (like the UK show, *Coronation Street*), “out-Hurleying” (98) (Elizabeth Hurley) every starlet (referring to “out-Heroding” in *Hamlet*), and becomes “the Maya Angelou of the doll world” (97), and is attacked by Andrea Dworkin for degrading women and by Karl Lagerfeld for emasculating men. If these are examples of preposterous yet engaging cross-indexing, a neologism such as “George W. Gush’s boredom and Al Bore’s gush” (87), and allusive lines such as “this Gotham in which Jokers and Penguins were running riot with no

Batman to frustrate their schemes, this Metropolis built of Kryptonite in which no Superman dared set foot” (86), are less diverting. The character of Perry Pinkus, “young Eng Lit person who liked to fuck the stars of her increasingly uncloistered world” (25), is funny but crude. A living testimony that “[y]ou could be famous for anything nowadays” (26), Pinkus is famous in the global literary circuit: in *Howard Stern*’s phrase, “Chicks dig writers. But then, a lot of writers dug this chick” (145).

There is no doubt that Rushdie’s copious use of pop culture sources adds charm to reading his work. But *Fury*’s “unscrupulous” mixing up of highbrow and lowbrow, and real and fictional, often perked up in sumptuous language and prolonged to several lines, has been read as contravening postmodern techniques, such as intertextuality or self-referentiality, and has been deprecated as representing “junk lit.” Gonzalez notes: “Junk lit is one thing if it stays in its own little ghetto, but serious writers recycling its well-tried formulas in order to reinvigorate the fictional organism is quite another” (“The Aesthetics” 126). Kumar derides Rushdie, stating that the “difference between a tabloid celebrity and a serious writer is not so much worth addressing.” While both Gonzalez and Kumar fail to clarify what they mean by “serious writer,” *Fury*, under its glittering surface, investigates the dissipation of high culture in a serious and exhaustive fashion. That is, *Fury* illuminates the process whereby the dissolution of high culture is replaced by an “aestheticization” (Jameson 2000; 53) of commodity.

Jameson argues that whereas the aesthetic was “very precisely a sanctuary and a refuge from business and the state, today no enclaves—aesthetic or other—are left in which the commodity form does not reign supreme” (1998; 70). Not only is the field of

high culture (the aesthetic and the academic) deeply predicated on consumer capitalism, but “the commodification of politics, or ideas, or even emotions and private life” also aims at “aestheticization”: that is to say, the commodity is now “‘aesthetically’ consumed” (2000; 53). Rather than glorifying or discrediting academia, what *Fury* illustrates exceptionally well is the readiness with which a variety of intellectuals “retool” their refined tastes for the aestheticization of glamorous yet unnecessary commodities. Sara Jane Lear, Solanka’s first ex-wife, serves as a prime example. Representative of the 1970s “serious life,” “the outstanding university actress” (31) with a thesis on Joyce and the French *Nouveau roman*, Sara was “slightly shameful” about working in frivolous advertising; “Selling things was *low*” and “nakedly capitalist (a horrible thought in that era)” (33). After twenty years, Sara’s huge success in Manhattan as an ad executive and wife of a late billionaire indicates the “absolute victory of advertising” (Ibid.).

If “everybody, as well as everything, was for sale” (33), as Sara’s materialistic success evinces, who could be free from this mercantile world and remain critical of it? If “everyone was an American now, or at least Americanized” (88), where would be the location *outside* America in which an aloof criticism can be made? As Cécile Leonard argues, is *Fury* composed of nothing but “cacophony and icons, random sounds and clichés” (107)? Leonard argues that in *Fury*, the “anger and destruction of [Rushdie’s] earlier works have muted into lighter, more comic ways to represent the void of the postmodern and the global” (108). To the contrary, “anger and destruction,” synonyms of none other than the novel’s title, dominate *Fury*:

Life is fury...Fury—sexual, Oedipal, political, magical, brutal—drives us to our finest heights and coarsest depths. Out of *furia* comes creation, inspiration, originality, passion, but also violence, pain, pure unafraid destruction, the giving and receiving of blows from which we never recover...This is what we are, what we civilize ourselves to disguise—the terrifying human animal in us, the exalted, transcendent, self-destructive, untrammelled lord of creation. We raise each other to the heights of joy. We tear each other limb from fucking limb. (30-31)

To recap the questions asked above: if everyone and everything are subject to the universal market called America, what would a critical position *beyond* such a market look like? *Fury* does not answer this question. Instead of concocting a Utopian space left intact from the American empire, Rushdie's novel redirects the latter half of the question: what would a critical position *within* such market look like? Just as Hardt and Negri's multitude, the agent of the ethical rebellion against the "Empire," undertakes its task *within* the Empire, *Fury* accepts the status quo as given (and as pleasurable to a degree), and attempts to decenter, if not leaving, the American empire. Just as Hardt and Negri's multitude evacuates, rather than demolishes, the locus of imperialist power by channeling it elsewhere, Rushdie's novel sabotages America's might by shifting focus to the disruptive power of fury and other cruxes of human life: "uncertainties," "excess," "contradiction," and "the inexplicable." Using examples richly found in works of/on Shakespeare, the Shiva tradition of Hinduism, and Greek mythology, Solanka's *fury/Fury* makes a turbulent receptacle of the essences of what it is to be human, which defy coherence, itemization, and commodification.

Solanka's updated notion of "*Sanyasi*" exemplifies a fundamental contradiction of his life. In search of "knowledge" and "peace" (81), Mr. Venkat, "big-deal banker," whose son Chandra was little Malik's friend in Bombay, abandoned his family for

sanyasi with a loincloth and a begging bowl in 1955. Solanka's *sanyasi* in 2000 New York, however, does not dispense with an eight-thousand-dollar per month "duplex and credit card" (82), and risks appearing a quest for stardom and sport in place of flight and peace. Nonetheless, Solanka claims that "he would be that contradiction" (Ibid.) and pursue "the power of flight" he longs for in his own way. If there is no fleeing from the American empire, Solanka would flee *into* the center of the empire and channel its "omnivorous" power for his own use; Solanka shall let America "eat" (44) his former murderous self in England and his fury so that he can gain the quietus. As if predicting his failure in the end, Solanka concludes: "if he failed, then he failed, but one did not contemplate what lay beyond failure while one was still trying to succeed" (82).

Suggestive of typical Rushdian sarcasm, Solanka adds: Jay Gatsby, "the highest bouncer of them all," failed too but lived, "before he crashed, that brilliant, brittle, gold-hatted, exemplary American life" (Ibid.). Considering *Fury*'s ending, showing Solanka's "bouncing" in the bouncy castle, the "bouncer" analogy here is remarkable. Solanka's willingness to try being a "bouncer," when he is aware of the difficulty of achieving his goal, is distinguished from Gatsby's ambition to "bounce" into the upper-class New York of the 1920s. Creator of the international star-doll Little Brain who ironically has less presence than his creature, Solanka lives a contradiction in which he is both a beneficiary (wealth and fame) and victim (fury and frustration) of celebrity culture. In the sense that Solanka's existence is already implicated in the glossy "exemplary American life," a type of challenge Solanka can pose to America is not to do away with

it, but to problematize it by constantly revealing contradictions, excess, and uncertainties uncontainable within it.

Solanka's determination to live an "exemplary American life," therefore, is not to confirm the validity of such life. In contrast, to keep "bouncing" knowing that he will fall means to be critical as much as he can. Solanka's rebellion against America *within* America through illuminating contradiction, excess, and uncertainties constellates Rushdie's novel. Saying that "uncertainty is at the heart of what we are" (115), Solanka goes on to highlight a crucial human desire for excess, in a tone reminiscent of *The Satanic Verses*:

We are made of shadow as well as light, of heat as well as dust. Naturalism, the philosophy of the visible, cannot capture us, for we exceed. We fear this in ourselves, our boundary-breaking, rule-disproving, shape-shifting, transgressive, trespassing shadow-self, the true ghost in our machine. (128)

For Al-Azm, *The Satanic Verses*' greatest achievement lies in metamorphosing Tabari's historic interpretation of the "satanic verses" of the *Qur'an* into "fallible human decision, contingent actions, imponderable consequences, shaky expectation, realizable and unrealizable dreams as well as into passions, calculations, hesitations, uncertainties, mistakes, doubts, anticipations, failures, successes, defeats, retreats, advances, i.e. into all the traits that define the condition of being human" (69). Rushdie's love of "messy humanity" (74), and his sometimes grotesque yet always eloquent defense of it, have not become rusty in *Fury*. For Solanka, to suppress the human need for excess—the "Gangetic, Mississippian inexorability" (178) that enthralls him as well as overwhelms him—amounts to, "in the matter of desire, agreeing to be dead" (179).

The primary task that an artist must fulfill in defiance of the American empire, then, would be to create that which incarnates such human traits as contradiction, excess, and uncertainty. In other words, if “under the self-satisfied rhetoric of this repackaged, homogenized...Mall America, people [are] stressed-out, cracking up, and talking about it all day long in superstrings of moronic cliché” (115), all the artist needs to do is to excavate “the great rough truths of raw existence” hidden under America’s “polished lives” (86). But in a world where “[n]obody remember[s] the original [and] everything’s a copy, an echo of the past” (142), to create something “true,” “real,” and “authentic” proves a nearly impossible project. On the streets is a “song for Jennifer [Lopez]: We’re living in a retro world and I am a retrograde girl” (Ibid.). And Eddie, Mila’s fiancé, threatens Solanka with “movie-hoodlum riffs” that sound more “authentic” than “natural pattern[s] of speech” to him, as if he were “Samuel Jackson about to waste some punk” (231). Solanka understands better than anyone else this reversal between real and copy, “a phenomenon” and “a simulacrum” (98), in contemporary pop culture. He is terrified to witness that Little Brain, his creation “born of his best self and purest endeavor, was turning before his eyes into the kind of monster of tawdry celebrity he most profoundly abhorred” (Ibid.). Yet, encouraged by his young Muses, or the *Furies* of creation and destruction, Mila and Neela, Solanka once again undertakes to create another story of dolls: “Let the Fittest Survive: The Coming of the Puppet Kings.”

The story of the PK tells of Akasz Kronos, “great, cynical cyberneticist of the Rijk” on a planet called Galileo-1. Hoping to stop the terminal decline of the Rijk civilization, Kronos creates PKs that are “better”—“faster, stronger, smarter” (163)—

than humans, such as the Dollmaker and his lover, the Goddess of Victory, modeled after Kronos' lover Zameen. The "Peekay revolution" in Baburia at the Galilean antipode, in which the cyborg puppets rebel against Kronos for freedom, is at once borrowed from the real coup of Indian-Fijians in Fiji and a foreshadowing of the fictional coup of Indo-Lillys in Lilliput-Blefuscu in *Fury*. What is significant in the PK story is that Solanka-Kronos continues to stress the "mystery" of life: "The fullness of a living self is inexpressible" (165). In allowing puppets "a degree of ethical independence" and six value-neutral traits that can be enacted in a good or bad way—"lightness, quickness, exactitude, visibility, multiplicity, consistency" (164)—Solanka explores the issues of moral agency, control and freedom, and the relationship between creator and the created. Once Solanka agrees on launching the story at PlanetGalileo.com, however, convinced by Mila that "this time you don't lose control [over your creation]" (179), Solanka's philosophical yarn is accompanied by consumer diversions, including a hyperlink to "*PK merchandise* available for INSTANT shipping NOW. All major credit cards accepted" (168). It is not before long that PlanetGalileo.com follows the route of Little Brain and becomes an "unprecedented interdisciplinary business enterprise...gone intergalactic" (224). Showcasing the "superlative force of a real American hit" (Ibid.), the Galileo fad allures sponsors from "Mattel, Amazon, Sony, Columbia, Banana Republic" (214), and yields byproducts from games, toys, models of Galileo-1, and the back-story book, *Revolt of the Living Dolls* (215), to the blueprints of a "restaurant chain!" "A Theme park!" and "A giant Las Vegas hotel!" (225). Another example of a misguided byproduct, the "LET THE

FITTEST SURVIVE” T-shirts become the “triumphalist slogan for the gym generation” (224).

The PK story’s all too easy turn to consumerism has predictably disturbed critics. In “*Solaris*, America, Disneyworld and Cyberspace: Salman Rushdie’s Fairy-Tale Utopianism in *Fury*,” Justyna Deszcz argues: “It is this human potential for conjuring, venturing into, and exploring imaginary realms that has long preoccupied Rushdie” (3). Deszcz notes that Rushdie’s effort to “construct alternative realities” (Ibid.) in *Fury* nonetheless ends up as a failure, inasmuch as the PlanetGalileo.com represents the “mercantilization of Internet” (11). Little more than “a mass-produce commodity,” all the Galileo website has to offer is “a fleeting and undemanding divertissement from everyday life, leaving no room for free thought” (Ibid.). Brouillette discusses Rushdie’s disillusionment with leftist politics resulting from his experience of the Nicaraguan revolution in 1987, arguing that the PK fiction exhibits “how those [leftist] politics are incorporated into contemporary media culture and enshrined in cultural commodities that themselves have no discernible authorship or origins” (140). Brouillette goes on to argue: “Literary celebrity in the contemporary market-place is after all an odd fit with commercial culture in general, as it is often premised on a critique of the very consumer mechanisms that allow it to exist” (154). What I find striking in the arguments of Deszcz and Brouillette is their polarizations between the mindless Internet versus “free thought,” and literary versus commercial. In destabilizing these polarities, *Fury* demonstrates that we have reached the point where our “inexplicable” desires for polar opposites—glamorous commodities and superficial celebrities on the one hand, and for

serious thoughts and literature on the other—not only coexist but also infringe upon each other. The “shining web” (225) story of the Peekays represents the disruption—and “mixing-up”—of the high/low category: serious non-commercial space shuffled with thoughtless commercial culture.

Intertwining with the stories of the “real” characters of *Fury*, all of whom are after all fictional, fictional characters including Kronos and Zameen, and their PK doubles, the story of the PKs experiments with the “possibilities (intellectual, symbolic, confrontational, mystificational, even sexual) of the two sets of doubles, the encounters between real and real, real and double, double and double,” which, according to Solanka, “blissfully demonstrates the dissolution of the frontiers between the categories” (187). In this never-ending story, a “many-armed, multimedia beast,” what is more important than answers and closure is to “rephrase” questions in an interesting way, mingling the “constant metamorphosis” of “personal history, scraps of gossip, deep learning, current affairs, high and low culture, and the most nourishing diet of all—namely, the past” (191). Once again, Rushdie’s attitude towards the PK story shows the abrupt change of tone reiterated numerous times in *Fury*: like Solanka’s many other criticisms and commentaries, his narration of the story begins with witty remarks and penetrating points, but concludes with ostensible sarcasm. While Solanka finds the freedom from linear narrative of the Internet fiction “exhilarating,” moving across past, present, and future with a “merest click of a mouse” (187), he regards the unlimited variation of the story as equivalent to a “ransacking of the worlds’ store house of old stories and ancient

histories” (191), the same strategy as the American empire’s “plundering and jumbling” of global cultural archives.

Jameson would view this “jumbling,” rather than invention, as “the death of the political” (1998; 62), insofar as for Jameson, the “invention of a radically new form” constitutes a political effort to “invent radically new social relations and ways of living in the world” (Ibid.). From this view, Solanka, whose multilayered story exhausts the existent form of digital writing rather than inventing a new form, will appear more of an assimilationist than a politically dissenting writer. But as I argue in the last paragraph but one, what *Fury* illuminates best is the degree to which contradictory human desires for all kinds of binary opposites are in constant conflict. Most of the time, the American empire concentrates its energy on eliminating this conflict by categorizing, commodifying, and “mechanizing” the inexplicable human. Solanka accurately notes that “the mechanization of the humans” (187) rules contemporary America: “unhappiness” is redefined as “physical unfitness,” “despair as a question of good spinal alignment,” “happiness [as] better food, wiser furniture orientation, deeper breathing technique” (183). The story of the PK revolution makes a keen political commentary on America by recounting the paradox of “the humanization of the machines” (187). When regional-national cultural production is replaced by Jamesonian world culture, to invent an entirely new form seems implausible. Testifying to the implausibility of such a project, Solanka’s web story chooses the most popular medium, representative of America’s cultural empire, the Internet, with all its speed, overloadedness, appropriation of local cultures, and ubiquitous shopping opportunities. Instead of denying the

omnipresence of the Internet, the PK story makes use of every web ingredient available in order to push the boundary of the medium, thus complicating it and inviting us to rethink it. *Fury*'s online novel-within-the novel, in this sense, is a reaffirmation of the "mystery" of the human that is subject to *and* overflows the machine. In this affirmation of human ambivalence lies Rushdie's struggle for transformation that does not lose sight of the political.

In the last pages of the second section of *Fury*, diagnosing the "mechanization of the humans," Solanka observes that the "damage" has been done "not to the machine but to the desirous heart" (183). If the first two sections of *Fury* are dominated by Rushdie's debonair style that often undermines the acumen of his criticism, the last section approaches its finale in a different—mildly bathetic ("desirous heart") yet nonetheless unsettling—key. Wood calls it "preposterous" that Rushdie "plume[s] himself up as a moralist towards the end of the book" (2001). I will argue, however, that the last chapters of *Fury* accomplish the feat of renouncing the American empire precisely by taking issue with the morality dictated by the empire. In this section, Solanka's inquiry on "the heart of what it means to be human" converges with what he calls the "Galileo moment" (188).¹¹ Borrowed from Galileo's recantation of the truth, "the earth moves," coerced by the Catholic Church, the Galileo moment comprises an ultimate test of the courage to say yes to obvious truth, overcoming the terror induced by the powerful. In Solanka's PK story, Kronos, faced with tyrannical Baburians at the Galilean antipode, goes against his heart and professes that the PKs, children of his passionate heart and scientific brain, "ha[ve] no souls whereas man [is] immortal" (189). "The recantation of

Kronos” thus demonstrates “his own cowardice, his lack of moral fortitude” (190). In other words, Kronos fails to acknowledge that the anthropocentric and despotic Baburians are despicable “barbarians,” while the freedom-seeking, noble-minded PKs are “better” than biological creatures—an intimation of *Fury*’s post-humanism.

One of the most significant passages in *Fury*, Neela’s “Galileo moment,” epitomizes “the impossible situation” (249) of every human being—be she cosmopolitan or national—living in the American empire today. For the purpose of this chapter, my discussion of Neela focuses more on her difficult double positions as a citizen-of-the-world, Cosmopolitan-sipping Manhattanite, and a national, whose “uprooted roots are pulling hard” (248), than on her characterization as “pure wet dream” (Allen). Allen states that the relationship between Solanka and Neela, “the last big emotional gamble of his life” (185), makes “sillier episodes in this mostly silly book”: for example, Solanka beholds with awe “the Neela factor” (149) (her “extreme physical beauty” (62) stops traffic and causes cars to bump); Solanka defends his stealing of Jack’s girlfriend by claiming that “we are all the servants of love” (146); “saved” by Neela’s love dissipating his fury, Solanka asks, “Could a woman’s hand really possess such power? (148). Solanka’s relationship with Neela—and Eleanor and Mila—along with his views on marriage and women in general have provoked ample discussion (or, furious damnations) among critics.¹² But what is poignant and redemptive about Neela’s Galileo moment is that she is torn apart between two undesirable choices of the cosmopolitan and the national, both of which are manipulated by celebrity culture, and that her embrace of the right inevitably leads to her death.

Fury uses treason, brave rejection of loyalty, in order to reveal the pernicious sides of both cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Earlier in the chapter, I discuss how the lives of diverse cosmopolites in Rushdie's novel, while they are sources of gleeful urbanity, are easily forgotten or falsely rejuvenated in the cultural empire of America; Dubdub's death and Sara Lear's success exemplify, respectively, an act of treason against and an assimilation to the culture of celebrification. In contrast, Jack and Solanka are well aware of the hypocrisy of ethnic loyalty: experiencing "the brutalities of blacks against blacks," Jack stops "hyphenating himself and has become simply an American" (57). Solanka, on witnessing the guerillas in Mildendo on the Lilliput island, recalls "the curse of communal trouble" ("it was your friends and neighbors who came to kill you, the very same people who had helped you" (241)). It is Neela, however, who accomplishes an ethical treason in exposing the wrongs of extreme Indo-Lillian nationalists, who imitate the fictitious PK revolution, and in recanting her fidelity to such nationalism at her Galileo moment. A genuine cosmopolitan, Neela has made New York City "a home away from home" (157), but is still connected to her roots. Better yet, Neela is able to distinguish between the Indo-Lillys, whose "free-market mercantilism" represents the "mechanical and utilitarian" inside human nature, and the Elbees (natives exploiting Indo-Lillys), who are the "magic and song" part of the human that "loves and dreams" (158); she is duly divided between her sympathy for the Elbees and a sense of justice for her people. Yet it is not until Neela returns to her fatherland to join Babur's coup, is enslaved and humiliated by Babur, and is presented with a Galileo moment by Solanka, that she fully understands the danger of such causes as "history,"

“justice,” and “my people.” Visited by Neela hidden behind a Zameen mask, Solanka, captive in a cell, makes her a pivotal speech in order to reclaim their “great untrammelled love” (249) for each other. For Solanka, the question that she must ask herself “really goes to the heart” (247):

You are convinced that your people, if I can use so antiquated a term, have been done down by history, that they deserve what Babur has been fighting for... You thought this was a struggle for human dignity, a just cause, and you were actually proud of Babur for teaching your passive kinsmen and kinswomen how to fight their own battles. In consequence, you were willing to overlook a certain amount of, what shall we call it, illiberalism. War is tough and so on. Certain niceties get trampled. All this you told yourself, and all the while there was another voice in your head telling you in a whisper you didn't want to hear that you were turning into history's whore... Once you've sold yourself, all you have left is a limited ability to negotiate the price. How much would you put up with? How much authoritarian crap in the name of justice? (248)

In the next paragraphs, Solanka restates the issue of “selling oneself” as a question of love. Confronting a lofty nationalist cause, Neela has mistakenly chosen to serve the masculine and patriotic Babur, “handsome Prince charming, who also, by a small mischance, turns out to be a psychotic megalomaniacal swine” (249). According to Solanka, to be with Babur means not only to approve the callous and mercenary world, which preaches that “goodness is a fantasy and love is a magazine dream,” but to risk “more than your life... your honor and self-respect” (Ibid.). Thus, Neela's recantation would be to admit her love for Solanka, “the fat old toad who knows how to give [her] what [she] needs” (Ibid.). Solanka asks: “Here it is, Neela, your Galileo moment. Does the earth move?... Do you still love me?” (Ibid.)

The penultimate chapter of *Fury* in which Neela's Galileo moment occurs deserves special attention for Solanka's utmost solipsism as well. As Solanka sees all

members of the FRM (“Filbistani Resistance Movement” from FILB, “Free Indian Lilliput-Blefuscu”) in Mildendo wearing masks of the PK characters, thereby turning the whole revolution into a political commodity inspired by his digital story, he remarks: “Lilliput-Blefuscu had reinvented itself in his image” (246). In this “Theater of Masks,” Solanka is struck by the irony that he, with no mask, is perceived as an imitator of Babur who, wearing the mask of “Commander Akasz Kronos” modeled after Solanka, has become the Commander; that is, the “creation was real while the creator was the counterfeit!” (239). Solanka suffers from the realization that his harmless pursuit of creation has gone awry and the denizens of his imaginative world have gone out into the world and grown monstrous. But his painful reflection, presumed to be self-critical, is solipsistic and self-glorious as well. In other words, Rushdie’s setup of this chapter, in which a national liberation movement on the other side of the world reproduces a popular Internet cyborg-puppet story, and in which the love for one man—“fat old toad”—can melt away the tyranny of all ideologies, remains unlikely and solipsistic. Notwithstanding, what would be fruitful for the critical reader is to notice the downside of the culture of celebrification shown in the chapter. On the one hand, Solanka’s transglobal journey to Lilliput-Blefuscu illustrates the worldwide effect of his multimedia American hit, transcending the realm of culture. On the other, in the process of becoming a global celebrity instead of remaining the author of his story, Solanka has completely lost control over his creation and cannot help witnessing the grotesque distortion of his well-intended, philosophical-minded creatures everywhere in the world.

Looking at the deranged Babur wearing “his own guilty face,” Solanka, like Satan in *Paradise Lost*, declares that wherever he travels, he discovers “a personal Hell” (246).

When a national revolution is maneuvered by American popular culture and is subject to political commodification, an ethical choice between cosmopolitanism and nationalism is impossible to make. Babur in the Akasz mask demonstrates the case: for the sake of the “justliness” of justice, Babur has “come off at the hinges” and has become “a servant of the Good” (246), which, ironically, transforms him into berserk nationalist ideologue *and* international political celebrity—two extreme faces of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. In order to uncover the cruelty of the absolute Good propagated by these ideologies, Neela must answer the paradoxical questions that necessitate a repudiation of conventional morality: “Can right be wrong? Is the wrong thing right for you?” (249). Neela’s final view of herself right before she dies as a “traitor, betraying the only cause she ever believed in” (253), thus connotes an ethical treason. Rather than abandoning one ideology in order to commit to another, her treason manifests an ethical desire to relinquish oppressive moral ideologies altogether. I call this deconstruction of the right and wrong, and national and global binary by means of treason a “radical cosmopolitanism.” An ethical principle in thinking the globalized world manipulated by the American empire, radical cosmopolitanism endorses non-allegiance, even treason and betrayal, as an ethical strategy that constantly problematizes its imperialist moral Law *within* the empire. Rushdie’s novel is an apotheosis of this poststructuralist mode of cosmopolitanism.

Neela's bombing of Babur and herself is characteristic of Rushdian atrocity, extreme yet regenerative, plentifully shown in his earlier work. For example, an annihilation of the whole Sinai family except for the teenaged Saleem by bombing in *Midnight's Children*, and of the whole Sufyan family except for their daughter, Mishal, by a fire in *The Satanic Verses*, curiously project catharsis and the hope for the orphans, finally freed from the burden of cultural and familial tradition and national history. While the relentless destruction of Neela might still be questioned in relation to Rushdie's proclivity for slaying the beautiful heroines of his novels, what I want to focus on in *Fury*'s ending is the effect invoked by the tragedy of Neela and the "orphaned" Solanka in the last chapter. In this four-page-long coda, Solanka returns to London under the regime of prime minister "Tony Ozymandias," only to see from a distance his son Asmaan playing with Eleanor and her new boyfriend, Morgen Franz, at Hampstead Heath. Solanka recalls with bitterness a line from Percy Bysshe Shelley's sonnet "Ozymandias": "*Nothing beside remains*" (257). Out of pain and fury from the loss of "everything I love on this earth," Solanka suddenly climbs up the "bouncy castle," and jumps and shouts "with all his might": "Look at me, Asmaan! I'm bouncing very well! I'm bouncing higher and higher!" (Ibid.). The elusive ending of the "bouncing" Solanka, its abrupt turn from Neela's grim death in a battlefield to Solanka's zany moment in the playground, has perplexed the few commentators who managed to say something about it. Baseless and hostile reviews aside, Rushdie's coda is read as implying: "an image of infantile regression" (Gonzalez 2005; 195); "the hopes...for a better, quieter, and a more peaceful world" hinted at by "the child safely at home" (C.

Leonard 106); and “a simplicity almost childlike in its sweet conclusion” (Caldwell).¹³ These critics, however, fail to recognize the tragic power of *Fury*’s ending, which, far from being simple and childish, summons up the ultimate challenge to the American empire.

By “tragic” I do not refer to the Aristotelian concept of tragedy, emphasizing the serious, the majestic, and the didactic, but the Nietzschean tragedy that celebrates the “Dionysiac madness” (7) dormant in the “essentially amoral life” (9). Since Nietzsche’s praise of the Dionysiac in *The Birth of Tragedy* is to redeem the Dionysiac music apart from the Apolline art, I do not intend to extend too far my interpretation of Solanka’s bouncing in the light of the Dionysiac tragedy. Nevertheless, Nietzsche’s declaration, that “all life is based on appearance, art, deception, point of view, the necessity of perspective and error” (8), echoes life’s fundamental uncertainty, excess, and contradiction, which Rushdie highlights in *Fury* in opposition to the utilitarian mindset boosted by the American empire. According to Nietzsche, the Greeks became “ever more optimistic, superficial, theatrical...[and] ardent for logic and for a logical interpretation of the world, and thus both more ‘cheerful’ and more ‘scientific’” (7) at the moment of their disintegration. Rushdie’s portrayal of New York City—its outward luster and inward angst, its feigned cheerfulness and pervasive (pseudo)science—bears a striking resemblance to the later Greeks. Likewise, Nietzsche’s warning against “the victory of *optimism*,” “practical and theoretical *utilitarianism*,” and “democracy” (original italics 9) not only goes for the Greeks and his contemporary Germans, but applies to the American(ized) cosmopolites in *Fury*.

Given Nietzsche's valuation of life "in the wrong" (9), and his aversion to "resignationism" (10) in the service of morality, the force of Dionysiac tragedy springs from the affirmation of life as it is, including inevitable death as part of life. That is to say, Dionysiac tragedy encourages the spectator to feel alive through the hero's "unbounded lust for existence and delight in existence" (79). Simultaneously, the same tragedy helps us to admit "a sorrowful end" (Ibid.) from which no being can escape. Rather than being "petrified with fear" (Ibid.), however, the spectator is invited to join "the eternal life of the will" of the hero, if briefly, locked in the oftentimes violent moment of "Dionysiac ecstasy" (80). Despite the hero's unavoidable death in the end, we are left with his "will to life": ergo, less sadness for the hero's physical death than catharsis from witnessing his invincible will.

This is why Neela's death elicits catharsis in spite of its mercilessness. Neela's will to the truth at her Galileo moment remains intact after she ceases to exist, acquiring "the eternal life of the will" which truly compels the audience of tragedy. Similarly, the following sentences, "The noise that emerged from [Solanka] was awful and immense, a roar from the Inferno, the cry of the tormented and the lost. But grand and high was his bouncing" (257), resonate with Dionysiac tragedy. The "sound and fury" that Solanka never stops to produce in *Fury* is at once a rebellion against mechanical and smothering America, and an assertion of the inexplicable yet liberating dimension of human life. While Solanka's treacherous *and* ethical struggle against the global empire sentences him to death—not physical death, but social banishment ("he had withdrawn from the world" (256))—his final bouncing exudes Dionysiac exaltation verging on poignant

insanity. This is because Solanka's constant bouncing upwards toward the unreachable heaven, not the transcendental heaven but a symbol for inexpressible human yearning as well as for the lost love of his son Asmaan, shows what Nietzsche defines as the core of the Dionysiac tragedy—the “supreme manifestation of the will” (79) of Solanka, which is left untouched regardless of his equally constant falling. I argue that *Fury* is a cosmopolitan novel *par excellence*, not because Rushdie's portrait of postmodern America embraces an American cosmopolitanism *post festum*, as prior critics argue, but because *Fury* embodies a radical cosmopolitanism, which uses the trope of treason in order to abandon allegiance to moral ideologies, disseminated by the American empire. In this sense, Rushdie's philosophical turn in *Fury*, for all its futile bouncing—its tragic rise and fall—confirms his “will to cosmopolitanism,” disclaiming any other commodified “isms.”

CHAPTER IV

“RIPPING OFF”: IRVINE WELSH’S *TRAINSPOTTING* AND *PORNO***Reading Welsh or, the Logic of Cultural Studies**

The remarkable range of the prior criticism of Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting* and Danny Boyle’s film of the same title matches the excitement that the novel and the film have evoked. Equally enthusiastic in their fascination with or dismissal of the texts, critics have used the abstruse theories of post-structuralism and postcolonial studies, methodologies as diverse as linguistics, masculinity studies, and media studies, and the lexicon of popular culture icons such as Iggy Pop and the Sex Pistols. In other words, in order to evaluate the novel and the film often categorized as belonging to the “margin,” “punk,” “cult,” and “repetitive beat generation” (Redhead), a huge body of critics composed of academics, journalists, and ardent fans called “trainspotters” (Paget 128) have borrowed from: Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, Homi Bhabha, Michel Foucault, and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari; from Scottish literary tradition beginning with Walter Scott to John Kelman, who used Scottish vernacular extensively to assert national, cultural, and class identities disparate from the English and won the Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 1994; from the recent fad of the fast-paced “cult novel” as opposed to what Guy Russell calls the “modern novel,” classics that read slow; and from punk musicians of the 1970s to the House music of the 1980s to 1990s Brit Pop bands, Blur and Oasis.

The striking diversity of critical works on—and their rapturous receptions of—the two *Trainspottings* demonstrate the degree to which both texts succeed in

transforming the subculture of drug junkies in 1980s Edinburgh into a mainstream cultural phenomenon. The exhilarating, masculine, and here-and-now youth culture of the trainspotters opposes “Janespotters” (Paget 128), another representative British mainstream culture popularized by the audience of genteel, feminine, and nostalgic film adaptations of novels by Jane Austen. This “crossing-over” of counter-cultural and rebellious Scottish junkies into mainstream British youth heroes, however, has evoked a sense of irony in some commentators and raised a fundamental question on the distinction—or, the lack thereof—between counter-culture and mainstream in a 1990s culture largely dominated by the global market. In his poststructuralist reading of *Trainspotting*, Alan Freeman indicates the commodification of the “anti-hero,” junkie outsider in this case:

Drug culture enacts the glamour of the outsider, the anti-hero beloved of modern Western culture, the imaginative antidote to bureaucratic circumscription. Yet the image of the anti-hero is closely related to the proliferating modes of representation in commodity culture. Far from being free, this modern individualism is a product, a commodity bought and sold, and the anti-hero is both consumer and consumed. (257-58)

Freeman’s view that Mark Renton, the novel’s junkie protagonist, is a “product” not free from the system of commodity culture is shared by Alan Sinfield. Sinfield argues that Renton turns out to be “a hero of bourgeois novel,” who reaches “an accommodation with the world at the end” (1997; xxiv). Despite their seeming bifurcated views of Renton as an anti-hero and a bourgeois hero, Freeman and Sinfield both regret that the novel’s power of destabilizing the signifier is demarcated by the commercialization of the “outside” and “anti” (Freeman), and the gentrification of the offensive and impeding (Sinfield); both critics discuss Welsh’s frequent, inarticulate use of the word “cunt” as an

example of the disrupting signifier. Michiko Kakutani is more explicit in her unfavorable comments on Welsh's novel. Kakutani criticizes it as one of "the latest offerings from a thriving new brand of tourism that offers bourgeois audiences a voyeuristic peep at an alien subculture, and lets them go home feeling smug with it" (1996). In spite of the novel's "knowing glimpses of insider rituals like shooting up," the novel "actually perpetuate[s] simplistic stereotypes that ratify bourgeois prejudices." That is, such portrayals of junkies and other outsiders are conducive to confirming the superiority of the middle and upper class.

At the center of the diverse questions, assessments, and arguments that emerge from the two *Trainspottings* lies the question of "crossing-over," which is felicitously condensed in Renton's final ripping off of his mates and his leaving for Amsterdam. In taking issue with borders of nations, classes, cultural beliefs, or life-styles, the question of crossing-over has been answered in terms as various as hateful assimilation, inevitable adaptation, and embittering betrayal. While *Trainspotting* is rightly considered to be "comfortable with contradictions" (D. Mendelsohn), its reviews and criticism create a battlefield between opposing literary "tastes," "good" and "bad" literature, and high(brow) and low(brow) culture. Unable to brand *Trainspotting* as either, however, reviewers and critics compare it to high modernist works such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* (Gunn), or to a Victorian best-seller (Caines), J. G. Ballard's *A Clockwork Orange* (Redhead), Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (Mandelsohn), and J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (Cardullo), thereby affirming *Trainspotting*'s protean crisscrosses. From a meta-critical perspective, critics' diverse and polarized assessments of the texts

reflect the turbulent field of cultural studies “after the great divide.” In “High/Low in an Expanded Field,” Andreas Huyssen’s revised follow-up of his classic *After the Great Divide*, Huyssen traces the recent victory of “market triumphalism” (369) that evinces “high is as much subject to market pressures as low” (370). Similarly, what we knew as “a vertical divide” of high/low has become “in the last few decades a horizontal borderland of exchanges and pillaging, of transitional travels back and forth, and all kinds of hybrid interventions” (Ibid.). Primarily determined by the global market, the categorization of culture today invalidates the traditional binary of high art and mass culture, or redefines notions of high and low, according to a new cultural rule.

The terms of Deleuze and Guattari, “deterritorialization” and “reterritorialization,” are fundamental to explaining the working of the global market, that is, how its supposedly liberatory act of breaking down old categories, be it between nations, classes, or identities, is soon followed by a Capital-serving recategorization. According to the Deleuzean scholar Phillip Goodchild, de- and reterritorialization are defined as unlimited crossing-over and production and as repression and antiproduction, respectively. While capitalism boosts deterritorialization for the sake of the global flow of capital, it simultaneously reterritorializes such crossing-over by “inject[ing] antiproduction everywhere, into every private sphere such as the family, personal life, free time, and perhaps even fantasy and dreams” (1996; 100). Capitalism, the “socius of decoded and deterritorialized flows,” is uniquely able to “enclose and reincorporate its own limits...and survive, because it can displace them through other reterritorializations” (Ibid).

The drug “culture” as depicted in *Trainspotting* would best exemplify this cycle of de- and reterritorialization. Interestingly, a significant number of critics of *Trainspotting* assert that its “triumph” lies in releasing a marginalized group of drug junkies into “wider cultural prominence and more visible expression” (Paget 139); although, for a critic like Foucault, visibility means being an object of social control and must be avoided. To adapt Sinfield’s cultural materialist approach, *Trainspotting*’s portrayal—rather, creation—of junkie “culture” testifies to the ways in which “literature contribute[s] to the processes whereby cultural norms come to seem plausible, even necessary” (xxxiv). Since Welsh is acclaimed as “one of the most significant writers in Britain” by the *Times Literary Supplement*, Welsh’s presentation of the lives of drug junkies becomes acceptable (at least, tolerable) within the scope of marginalized yet normalized “sub”cultures. Critics’ celebration of the new-found junkie “culture” demonstrates the cycle of de- and reterritorialization in which drug use, as a culture, is displaced out of the slum and rendered visible for all audiences, yet, given adjectives such as “alternative,” “minor,” and “counter,” the stigma of margin and inferiority is reaffirmed. In other words, junkie life is reified into a counter-cultural “lifestyle,” an example of consumer capitalism’s replacing of “life with lifestyle” (Freeman 256). Tellingly, hardly any critic discusses, much less condemns, Renton’s final turn to “straight” life because, I assume, leaving a junkie life does not require an excuse. Intent on providing a moral assessment of drug use, either glorifying it as a countercultural rebellion or critiquing it as a “drug-supported idealism” (Kaufmann), critics fail to note the aloofness with which Renton describes drugs’ horrifying as well as ecstatic sides. In

short, Renton knows that heroin “takes as well as gives” (14). Welsh’s description of the mental and physical pain that the drug brings to its users is as graphic and grim as the description of their exaltation that quickly comes and goes. Welsh repeats in interviews that drugs are “value-free thing[s]” for him, without which writing about Edinburgh would be “pretentious” (Redhead 148). As opposed to critics’ attempt to dig out the moral values of drug culture, drugs for Welsh’s characters do little more than helping them “get through the long, dark night of late capitalism” (*Acid House* 240).

The integration of drug “culture” to cultural studies under the flag of multiculturalism does little but serve the homogenization of the contemporary world of global capitalism. In “Multiculturalism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism,” Žižek illuminates how multiculturalism, as the “ideal form of ideology of global capitalism,” reproduces the ways that the colonizer treats each local culture of the colonized by carefully “studying” them and “respecting” them from the privileged, “empty global position” (44). By respecting the Other as “a self-closed authentic community” from a distance, multiculturalism is tantamount to “a racism with a distance,” whose tolerance of the Other forecloses the “dimension of the Real of the Other’s *jouissance*” (37). An overwhelming percentage of reviews and critical works on *Trainspotting*’s antisocial, illegal, and fringe aspects, which render Welsh a representative of “bad boy literature,” would evince Žižek’s scathing critique of cultural studies today. Considering that it is “practically impossible to call into question the logic of Capital” (35), Žižek argues that critical energy finds a substitute outlet in “fighting for cultural differences which leave the basic homogeneity of the capitalist

world system intact” (46). Today’s cultural studies’ battle to make room for the rights of ethnic, gay and lesbian, and other different “life-styles,” while capitalism blindly marches on, ultimately works for the “unrestrained development of capitalism by actively participating in the ideological effort to render its massive presence invisible” (Ibid.). It is not difficult to see Žižek’s point when the reader thinks of what has resulted from the enthusiastic discussions of *Trainspotting*’s “alternative” “life-style” from a multiculturalist perspective: a new-found niche for academic publication merging literary studies and popular culture; special interviews with actual trainspotters conducted by a fancy magazine; a stage version and the club named “Trainspotting”; money and fame to Welsh; and the revival of British cinema in terms of international market, as is amply recorded in Xan Brooks’ *Choose Life: Ewan McGregor and the British Film Revival*. One cannot but wonder what change this commodification of under-class lives brought to the real Leith.

Both of the literary and cinematic texts of *Trainspotting* and the criticism on them, through their interests in the theme of crossing-over, are symptomatic of the breakdown of the hierarchization of culture, or of the advent of a new cultural order—the postmodern global rule called the “Empire” by Hardt and Negri. Unlike modern European empires strictly distinguishing between center and margin, and the self and the Other, for an effective suppression of the colonized, Hardt and Negri’s Empire is a new hybrid rule that has no visible center-government, but reorganizes (reterritorializes) the world under the fluid, mobile, and heterogeneous—thus seemingly deterritorializing yet in actuality more oppressive without looking oppressive—sovereignty of global

capitalism. Whether *Trainspotting* is subjugated to the cultural Empire or is disruptive of it—or, if there can exist another way to break away from this subjugation/disruption binary—remains to be discussed in this chapter. As I mention earlier, *Trainspotting*'s crossing-over in many directions culminates at Renton's final "choice" of ripping off his mates. His running away with his mates' shares in a drug scheme, along with the renunciation of his abject Scottish working-class masculinity in favor of Amsterdam's transnational consumerism embodied in his treachery, may well attract a heated debate on the justice of such crossing-over without compunction. For all the remarkable trajectory of prior criticism of *Trainspotting*, however, a commentary on the powerful yet perturbing ending has been curiously lacking. Critics such as Jane Mandelsohn briefly mention that the theme of betrayal is "one most important question" of the novel, and Bert Cardullo states with no further elaboration that "[t]hroughout we wonder above all else whether Renton will be able to 'betray' his mates by kicking his heroin habit, moving on, and finally becoming his own man" (159). Other critics discount the ending as "too neat" (Jeffers) in contrast of the rhizomatic structure of the novel, and simply call Renton a "selfish lout who betrays his best mates" (Kakutani 1996). Another group of critics remain reticent, or provide bland commentaries constraining Welsh's and Boyle's endings as reproducing the "bourgeois defeat of drug-supported idealism" (Kauffmann 38) and a "coming-of-age story" (Totah).

Renton's final rip-off has offered an especially hot spot with regard to Boyle's film, no matter whether his betrayal has been defended as a strategic adaptation, or a subcultural strategy for visibility (Totah), or has invited sarcastic remarks due to

Renton's assimilation to bourgeois consumerism. In "M for Marketing," Justin Wyatt finds the film's marketing ironical insofar as it means "the selling of the disillusionment with the system doing that selling" (39). In the words of Clair Monk, Boyle's *Trainspotting* addresses "a generation of 'Thatcher's children' for whom the conflation of subcultural dissent and entrepreneurial capitalism holds no contradictions"; for them, "leaving the underclass is simply a matter of exercising free choice" (285). While revealing the ironical lack of freedom in 'free' human agency and the absence of choice in a 'free' market that characterized Thatcher's neo-liberal economic policy, Boyle's film turns Renton's taunting of the Thatcherite manifesto in the novel—"Choose Life"—into the catchphrase of movie marketing. Numerous reviewers and critics of the film pinpoint the disturbing ease with which *Trainspotting* crisscrosses boundaries of center and margin and rejection and assimilation. On one hand, it goes without saying that Boyle's film brought back the then-moribund British cinema to life with its cinematic revolutions. Examples of such revolution include: the use of pop music; the lively camerawork reminiscent of the two Beatles documentaries, *A Hard Day's Night* (1964) and *Help!* (1965), both directed by Richard Lester; a mixing of realism and surrealism exemplified by the infamous "worst-in-Scotland" toilet scene; and the raw, graphic visuals that cause the film to be called an "extended pop video" and "recent drug pornography" by Will Self (qtd. in Totah). On the other hand, it is also true that the film heralds the revival of British cinema by embracing the slogan "Cool Britannia." The title of the modernizing, market-driven project of Tony Blair's government, which was launched shortly after the release of the film in 1997, "Cool Britannia" attempts to lift

the tenacious national image of post-imperial decline and trauma, and vigorously rebrands the nation as “innovative, dynamic, non-conformist, forward-looking and optimistic” (Monk 283). In “Transnational *Trainspotting*,” Murray Smith discusses the ways in which Boyle’s film imports American culture in order to re-disseminate it to an international audience after blending it with Scottishness. In interweaving the underlying Americanness of the MTV music and hip cinematography with other international culture icons such as James Bond and the local specificity of Leith’s drug scene, the film *Trainspotting*, Smith notes, shows that local and global are not distinguished in current film industry. The fidelity to the regional is superseded by the primacy of the “audience”: succinctly, “film is for the audience and since audience is international, film should be international” (226). Smith dedicates two short chapters to explaining Renton’s final act in his slim book-length study of the film, but Smith’s conventional interpretation of the “very traditional themes” of Boyle’s film, “childhood, friendship, loyalty—and the messy business of leaving all of these behind” (36)—is less satisfactory than his explication of the ways in which the film establishes Renton’s sense of irony and self-sarcasm in order to have him eventually “win on all fronts, being both decent (sensitive and compassionate) and ‘bad’ (smart, hip and self-assertive) – that is, good and thus admirable according to both mainstream and countercultural criteria” (51). Hence, Renton’s real integration is “with the audience – the youthful, liberal, ‘cool’ audience whose approval the film above all seeks” (50).

Since the publication of *Trainspotting*’s long-awaited sequel, *Porno*, Renton’s ripping-off in *Trainspotting* appears all the more inconsequential. Partly due to the

recent publication date and partly to the much smaller impact of the sequel compared to the original, there are only a handful of reviews of *Porno*, and virtually no scholarly writing in spite of the reviewers' general enthusiasm towards it. While they agree that the sequel is "less urgent than the original" (Baker) and understandably lacks the "sheer freshness of the original" (Phipps), most of the commentators welcome the familiar characters as reunited by Welsh. What is worth noting in the twelve reviews of *Porno* that I have examined are two main complaints. First one is about Welsh's "smugness" towards late capitalist society. *Porno* portrays Renton's society nine years later, where an extended addiction to capitalism, to the new drug of choice (cocaine), and to pornography—and even to Welsh's prose, the "real addiction of *Porno*" (Shone)—is as rampant as *Trainspotting*'s drug addiction; but Welsh appears to enjoy too much describing it, rather than critiquing it. Multiple reviewers are dismayed by Renton and Sick Boy, who have embraced global capitalism, in favor of Begbie and "Juice" Terry, whose resistance to the gentrification of Leith is "more compelling than the selfish rants and bragging of Sick Boy and Renton" (Phipps). According to these reviewers, Begbie's rage and violence, the extreme, bombastic character that Welsh loves and calls a "guy-in-the-pub-type" (Redhead 151), adds the edginess to the novel, overpowering Sick Boy's glib pop philosophy. The second drawback concerns structure. In contrast to *Trainspotting*'s "tightly crafted series of vignettes" (Phipps), *Porno*'s "over-plot" is untidy and cumbersome, and its ending (Renton "punishes" Sick Boy by ripping him off, and seeks forgiveness from the comatose Begbie) is sentimental for its *machinus ex dei* element (Caines). As Welsh mentions, *Porno* is the story of Sick Boy, who now wants

to be called Simon David Williamson and who is painted as a “born exploiter, instinctive, a creature of his times” (472)—with an irresistible “flashbulb smile” (253). For Simon, betrayal is little more than a good “theme” to “warm to” in order to get under Renton’s skin and take revenge on the “red-headed Judas fucker” (168). Given Simon’s lethal deception of Renton (he hides from Renton that Begbie has been released from prison and is seeking revenge on Renton) and Renton’s rage after he finds it out, Renton’s ripping off Simon at the end does not strike reviewers as overly perfidious and impressive for all its semblance to *Trainspotting*’s ending.

If critics of *Trainspotting* have been baffled by Renton’s provocative final crossing-over but have neglected to delve into it further than judging it as an either/or issue, *Porno*’s closure with Renton’s ripping off of Simon urges us to contemplate the two novels in relation to this recurrent theme. In a 2000 interview undertaken while Welsh was writing *Porno*, Welsh articulates the *raison-d’être* of the theme of betrayal in writing about the Scottish working-class:

My writing is a response to the changes of the last ten years and how they affect working-class communities. When I look at the stuff of some writers that I admire, say Jimmy McGovern, one of the main themes is betrayal—unions, welfare state, churches, extended and nuclear families, how those institutions have failed the working-class by failing to protect them from global capitalism and the disintegrating society. I kind of take all that as given and I’m more interested in what the ‘Thatcher’s Children’ generations of forty and under of the working class get up to—how they survive in the current economy and society. (Redhead 142)

In the same interview, talking about current project, tentatively entitled *Trainspotting 2*, Welsh announces the return to his original “nasty” and “edgy” (144) writing style, after his previous works have come to be treated as “‘proper’ literature” (143) and many of

them have been adapted as films and plays: in short, they “went mainstream” (140). Welsh explains that the fact *Trainspotting* was promptly appropriated into “the heart of consumerism” (141) is why he did not follow up its success with a sequel at the time. To borrow his words, he decided to wait and “get rid of all the ‘Brit Pop’ style wankers” (144). Despite commentators’ disappointment at *Porno*’s submission to the base entrepreneurism embodied in porn business, Welsh’s sequel resumes the anti-capitalist project of *Trainspotting* with a renewed emphasis on the theme of betrayal. As Ian Peddie notes in his 2007 interview with Welsh, the “morality of capitalism and morality of friendship” underpin Welsh’s works. In response to Peddie’s question about the repeated use of “rip-off” in his narratives, Welsh answers that it expresses a natural “idea of transgression...a need in our world of breaking out of the control exerted over our lives” (135). This exploration of the link between morality, capitalism, and friendship, and Welsh’s belief in the need of transgression in the form of betrayal, are the core spirit of *Trainspotting* and *Porno* that prior studies have intimated yet failed to fully illuminate.

If prior criticism on Renton’s betrayal is polarized between celebrating it as a “growing up” and strategic integration, and condemning it for his renunciation of communal identities and acceptance of global capital order, I argue that we need to shift focus and concentrate on the degree to which the sub/countercultural world of Welsh’s novels is saturated by global capitalism. *Trainspotting* and *Porno*’s critique of capitalism does not come from their complete escape and freedom from the system but from their constant search of the ways to intervene in—and “rip off”—that omnipotent

system. Welsh critiques mainstream that there exists “no real opposition within the mainstream” and that the only resistance to it resides “outside the system” (Redhead 144). In the same interview, Welsh admits that the desire for transgression assumes its implausibility in reality and that “there isn’t any real political agenda to challenge ...capitalism” (145). Indeed, for an author whose name is synonymous with “art terrorist and cultural activist,” writing in rebellion of the “middle-class Oxbridge voices writing about the same stuff” (Walsh), Welsh is “not against having loads of money” (Walsh) and becoming a “celebrity ponce” (Redhead 150). This is because, Welsh observes, the commercial success moves him beyond hostile criticism, gets non-novel readers (inmates, for instance) to read his books, and gives him more time to think about the injustices he writes about. Thus, while he is sarcastically described as “scornful of everything in Britain’s literary establishment except its royalty checks” (Parker), Welsh accepts the logic of cultural market as inevitable and even in a way positive. My point is that this tension between an inescapable adoption of a capitalist mode and the radical challenge to it from “outside,” rather than being wholly complicit to the system or denying it altogether, comprises the ethical crux of *Trainspotting* and *Porno*. These novels’ searches for better anti-capitalist strategies that would “rip off,” if not completely disrupt, the given capitalist reality are felicitously demonstrated through a ripping off of mates (although the meaning of friendship is multilayered in Welsh’s novels). In the next section, I will argue that Renton’s ripping off intervenes in the rigid cycle of de- and reterritorialization and, in renouncing the realm of the social Law, embodies an “ethical Act” as defined by Lacan. Renton’s abdicating the plane of

capitalism connotes the death drive (social death) towards the Lacanian *jouissance* that radically rejects the capitalist Law. *Porno* portrays the world after Renton has “chosen life” where the original novel’s pursuit of the Lacanian Real *outside* or *beyond* the Law appears impracticable. I contend that *Trainspotting* and *Porno*’s radically different ways of “ripping off” capitalism are instrumental to understanding the tumultuous critical debate on the *location* of cultural studies in the last two decades. A timely update of anti-capitalist strategy, *Porno* demonstrates that the only way to critique global capitalism is from *within*. *Porno* satirizes the ethos of capitalism per se, capitalist “virtues,” such as trust and friendly transaction, as little other than masking exploitative capital order by having Renton rip off Simon, an “upwardly mobile thirty-six-year old entrepreneur” (4). This transition from *Trainspotting*’s realm of the Unconscious to *Porno*’s Rabelaisian world of the pseudo-intelligent, in which “power wins through, basest instincts predominate and everyone gets shafted” (Peddie 136), is a powerful testimony to the vision and revision of the rebellion against capitalism, and an important rethinking of the question of the locus of cultural and political revolution.

Trainspotting

Since many critics argue that *Trainspotting*’s nonjudgmental presentation of an alternative life-style is its major achievement, it risks appearing moralizing to assess what Renton calls “just a minor betrayal” in his last voiceover of the film version. Renton’s minor betrayal, however, creates a profound interruption within the consensual capitalist reality. Renton’s ripping off the capitalist Law embodies the spirit of ethics,

which Zupančič defines as “a disturbing interruption” against “‘the smooth course of events,’ life as governed by the reality principle” (5). I will scrutinize Renton’s final crossing-over, not in order to brand him as an assimilationist to global Europe in rivalry with postcolonial Scotland, but in order to reveal the death drive that is entailed in Renton’s “class suicide” and “junking the nation” (Farred 224). While Grant Farred argues that Welsh’s novel renounces postcolonial nationalism as “the most addictive of ideological drugs” (226) and favors transnational Amsterdam, both the novel and the film conclude with Renton’s act of leaving. And the prospect of Renton’s (supposedly liberating) cosmopolitan life in Amsterdam remains uncommented, or the reader learns in the opening episodes of *Porno* that Renton’s life in Amsterdam is no less dissatisfying. Instead of repeating the prior debate on which is better, nationalism or globalism, and communitarianism or individualism, I propose that Renton’s betraying of his mates, class, and fatherland comprises a Lacanian ethical Act insofar as his betrayal does not mean to adopt another ideology of transnationalism and consumer individualism but, in Deleuze and Guattari’s words, to “leave the plan(e) of capitalism” (472) as such. If Renton’s negation of life, friendship, and nation-state is ethical, this is not because he seeks drug-induced escape from the social nor because he “grows up” and opts out of the messy present into “hip” cosmopolitanism, as prior critical defenses of Renton’s treachery have suggested.

As I have discussed in the first section, *Trainspotting*’s portrayal of drug culture and the lives of (non-)working-class youths on the dole, which appears “outside” and “beyond” the system, is in fact circumvented (reterritorialized) by global capitalism.

That is, the drug culture perpetuates the logic of the capitalist market and that human intimacy as represented by friendship is handled by capitalist utilitarianism. Renton's ripping off interrupts with this cycle of de- and reterritorialization through his death drive. Having little to do with the life/death binary that is avidly propagandized by both right and left today, the death drive pursues "the better," whatever may come after the symbolic death. According to Lacan, who distinguishes between biological death, symbolic death, and the death drive, an ethical Act *par excellence* is best exemplified by Antigone's imperative to bury her brother Polyneices against her own and her community (Creon)'s good. This Act, which is driven by death yet fearless of death, leads to a symbolic death, which corresponds to becoming "unrecognizable to the community" (Cho 27). While the current discourse on the life and death opposition emphasizes their bifurcation and the moral absolute endowed on each, *Trainspotting*'s foremost contribution lies in the deconstruction of this life versus death binary. Rather, Welsh's novel exposes how this binary is fabricated by Thatcher's neo-liberal government and the current "Leftist" government. As Welsh calls Tony Blair's Labour Party the "Tory Party" (Redhead 144), both right and left have become mainstream and make no real conflict in the system, no matter whether they struggle for Foucauldian biopower for social control, or rebel against it with death. For an example of the latter, inspired by the current fascination with horror, fanatics and extremists "want nothing more than to die for their cause" (Zupančič 5), which is as ruinous as biopower. In *Trainspotting*, the life mapped out by 1980s Britain is no less paralyzing than death, which leads Renton to declare: "Ah choose no tae choose life" (188). But choosing

death is not necessarily any more liberatory, as is exemplified by baby Dawn's horrifying death and Renton's brother Billy's being killed in Ireland. Showing all spectra of life and death, *Trainspotting* does not aim at inventing a cultural "thirdwayism" of Anthony Giddens, because a "thirdway" amounts to no more than a conditional "transgression [that] can only be accomplished against the background of a law that can be transgressed" (Cho 27). Instead, Renton's imperative to leave his friends behind is more radical, for it is beyond life and death, good and evil as defined by capitalist reality. It connotes a complete indifference to the rule of capitalism that prescribes moral values of life and death and the terms of friendship.

Welsh seems aware of the working of de- and reterritorialization when he states that the extreme characters he likes to invent are "both excluded from the system and are actually incorporating themselves right into the system," which he finds "pretty bleak" (Redhead 145). At first, Renton appears to abandon his working-class Scotland, the "skag and HIV capital of Britain" (Morton), in preference of Amsterdam's intra-national consumerism, which is free from "a litany of Jambos, schemies, soapdodgers, Weegies and Huns whose antics might almost make Marx revise the future in favour of the bourgeoisie" (O'Brien). Renton's "choice" to deterritorialize himself out of class/national boundaries, however, remains subject to a reterritorializing power to recategorize him under new, commodity-oriented identifications. This is because, as Hardt and Negri explicate, "the globalization or deterritorialization operated by the imperial machine is not in fact opposed to localization or reterritorialization, but rather sets in play mobile and modulating circuits of differentiation and identification" (45).

Reflecting the “neo-liberal commodification of identity politics” (Herbrechter 125), *Trainspotting*’s characters are often depicted with eye-catching “post” suffixes by commentators. Renton and his mates on the dole belong to the “post-working” class and “post-political” generation (Monk 274; 278), and are beneficiaries of a “post-literate” culture (Walsh) and “post-punk” propositions (Redhead). And their perverse masculinities rooted in the Hard Man tradition of Scottish fiction are at odds with contemporary “postfeminist” and “postgender” culture (Herbrechter 109). These “post” identifications indicate the irrelevance of dated communal categories in late capitalist society without suggesting new viable models. If drug “culture” represents a “post” subculture artificially created and sustained by consumerism, *Trainspotting*’s characters with “post” suffixes are lost between untenable communal values and the equally unattractive prospect of New Left communitarianism, a stalemate that causes them to resort to drugs.

In this sense, “choosing” the life of a junkie ironically uncovers the absence of choice in Welsh’s novel. In a neo-imperial capitalist world where even “personal” cultural tastes are constructed, “the fusion between imperialism, capitalism and consumption are too close for conscious choices to be made” (McRae). Margaret Thatcher’s infamous remark, “people must be free to choose what they consume in goods and services” (qtd. in Horton 226), remains a hollow slogan that, by dictating the terms of choice, discloses the lack of choice in a “free” market society. Renton’s countercultural manifesto, “Ah choose no tae choose life,” parodies Thatcher’s above words, because he deems life as “society’s spurious convoluted logic tae absorb and

change people whae's behaviour is outside its mainstream" (187). At the same time, precisely insofar as Renton realizes the futility of choice in a deterritorializing and reterritorializing society, his "choice" of not choosing life is not his own and is self-mocking. On the theme of choice imposed on by consumer capitalism, Welsh argues for a "freedom *from* choice":

[I]n the absence of any real political opposition all you've got is, there's no real tension or dynamic in the mainstream society, it's all these trivia, it's a collection of lists, like the internet, fashion, style. It's like a quest to find newer things and different things, more choice, more meaningless choices. What we really need is freedom *from* choice. (original italics, Redhead 145)

On a half sarcastic and half defiant note, Renton chooses not to choose the life of an adult, because "over twenty...it's aw ugly compromise, aw timid surrender, progressively until death" (216-17). He chooses not to choose politics either, because "morality goat [nothing] tae dae wi politics...It's aw about poppy" (315). In place of the mature ethico-political individual, ideal citizen of the West since Plato, Renton chooses a junkie's life, which reaffirms his negation of life as "society's spurious convoluted logic." It needs to be acknowledged that *Trainspotting's* junk narrative destabilizes "the traditional western narrative of health and progress" (Harold 879), but Renton's choice of the junkie life is no more free from the system than Thatcher's empty propaganda of the freedom of choice, soon reterritorialized by the culture of commodification.

Before examining how the drug "culture" serves as a supreme example of modern commodity culture in Welsh's novel, it is noteworthy how drugs create, if momentarily, the realm of the Unconscious uncontained by capitalist economy. While Kevin McCarron argues that junk narrative focuses on the self and seeks "no political

solutions” (6), Leanne McRae borrows the word *jouissance*—what she translates into “orgasm, little death”—so as to elucidate Renton and his mates’ challenge to capitalist-controlled consciousness. Expressing the “desire to accelerate beyond the control of corporate commodification,” Renton’s drug-taking modifies the consciousness by accelerating to oblivion. Via a chemically-induced sphere of the Unconscious, McRae argues that *Trainspotting* creates “an alternative space for imaging...outside the structured and straightforward realities of a time.” Thus, Welsh’s novel is able to “speed through the capitalist economy and the citizens tethered to its machinations.” Renton’s junk habit opens up a realm of the Unconscious that represents, in Lee Edelman’s words, “an impossible excess haunting reality” (10), glanced at through death and drug-induced *jouissance*. Although the potential of drug use—the sense of liberation it brings to the user (and the reader)—is apparent in *Trainspotting*, McRae (like other critics using the term *jouissance* in interpreting *Trainspotting*) fails to explain why Renton quits heroin in the end.

Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of drug addicts in the second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is instrumental to understanding Renton’s Act of leaving the junkie world. According to Deleuze and Guattari, “All drugs fundamentally concern speeds, and modifications of speed” (282). By appearing to “eliminate forms and persons [and] bring into play the mad speeds of drugs and the extraordinary posthigh slownesses” (283), drugs give the Unconscious the immanent plane where the imperceptible desire can be perceived. Nevertheless, drugs cannot lead to any subversive action, because their deterritorialization is “constantly being segmentarized

under the most rigid of forms, that of dependency, the hit and the dose, the dealer” (284). In a word, reterritorialization. Via hallucinations, delusions, false perceptions, phantasies, or paranoid outbursts, drugs restore forms and subjects. Similarly, Renton’s body resembles a Deleuzian “body without organs” when he feels completely disemboweled in the toilet in “The First Day of the Edinburgh Festival”: “Ah empty ma guts, feeling as if everything; bowel, stomach, intestines, spleen, liver, kidneys, heart, lungs and fucking brains are aw falling through ma arsehole intae the bowl” (25). Given that the Deleuzian BwO is “what remains when you take everything away [such as] the phantasy, and significances and subjectifications as a whole” (151), Renton’s suffering from the fantasy of the dead Dawn and other delirious moments followed by painful withdrawals illustrate that Renton’s brief moment of the Unconscious, its elixir, cannot make him a BwO, the agent of Deleuze’s ethical revolution. Renton resides in a stalemate, stuck between the “junk dilemma,” which is “life-taking and life-giving” (10), and the “straight dilemma” of the “nine-to-five arsehole” (300), rather than remaining the “master of speeds” (Deleuze and Guattari 285). Deleuze and Guattari conclude that drug addicts are “false heroes” who resort to chemical, hence artificial, substances, whose “conformist path of a little death” is not worth the ensuing the “long fatigue” (Ibid.).

Renton’s junkie world invokes a speck of *jouissance* and creates an excess that temporarily negates the capitalist social. What Renton calls the “beautiful heroin’s tender caresses” is incomparably better than the twenty times of “yir best orgasm” (11) and makes a stark contrast of a declining life as bad as death. As Renton says, “Death

cannae be worse than daein nowt tae arrest this consistent decline” (223). The epigraph of Welsh’s *Ecstasy* borrowed from Iggy Pop’s lyrics manifests that “death doesn’t kill you. Boredom and indifference kill you.” But Renton’s ethical Act lies in his leaving it, on realizing that his junkie world is subject to the abusive commodity culture as well as other “sub”cultures.

Susanne Hagemann argues that “the drug scene in which they [Welsh’s characters] live forms part of modern commodity culture, the activities of buying and selling assuming paramount importance. Social interaction is suffused by self-interest. Community and continuity are conspicuously absent” (13). The urgent need of another shooting and the manipulation of friendship to get one present itself in the very first episode of Welsh’s novel where Renton and Sick Boy, sweating from the pain of withdrawal, visit the dealer Johnny Swann, a.k.a. Mother Superior. Once “a really good mate” of Renton, a “nice laddie” “so intae fitba, so easy going” (10), Johnny’s slogan now is: “Nae friends in this game. Jist associates” (6). Another dealer, Mike Forrester, is a “god” to Renton, whereas Renton is a “pawn” in the game of pleasing Mike when Renton goes through “an almost complete disintegration ay ma central nervous system” (18) during withdrawal. Although Renton is often described as compassionate, in the “It Goes Without Saying” episode, it goes without saying that Renton shoots himself first when he feels sorry for Leslie for her baby Dawn’s death and kindly cooks a shot for her. Sick Boy makes a good example of the dissolution (deterritorialization) of childhood friends and their being reterritorialized into “acquaintances”—what Renton calls “a brilliant metaphor for our times” (11)—which screens exploitative business

partnership with friendship. Sick Boy, suffering from withdrawal, throws at Renton his big pleading eyes, making “poignant testimonies tae ma [Renton’s] supposed betrayal” (4); Renton takes time worrying about the late return fee on the video they were watching when Sick Boy feels sick and must rush to Mother Superior’s. Most of the times, however, Sick Boy believes that “mates are a waste of fucking time” (28) and enjoys setting “interpersonal booby-traps” (12) for his mates (Appropriately, Simon successfully reinvents himself as an ambitious entrepreneur in *Porno*, because he excellently performs a “nauseating best buddies routine” (364), wears “the fucking irresistible” “hurt, wounded look” (392-3), and is “ultra fucking selfish” (437)). The drug culture’s resemblance to other commodity cultures lies not only in their encouragement of consumption to the level of addiction, but also in their dissolution and redefinition of intimacy.

In addition to the drug culture, which, as an object of cultural studies, has become the colonized Other of multicultural capitalism, friendship is another locus through which to witness a similar colonization by a multiculturalist approach to *Trainspotting*. Žižek indicates that the capitalist ideology of multicultural liberalism is best realized in the figure of the “citizen of the world” who allegedly “surpass[es] the limitations of [his or her] ethnic identity” but in actuality is a “narrow elitist upper-middle class” (47). Through the eyes of this tolerant universalism, Renton and his mates stuck in Leith would belong with the majority of common people, despicable for “being caught in their narrow ethnic or community confines” (Ibid.). If Sick Boy of Italian descent has the potential to be a citizen of the world, frequently going on a vacation

abroad with foreign girls and not abiding by the outdated mode of Scottish male bonding, Begbie represents the opposite of Simon, an antagonistic tribal figure who is not ready for the era of global permissiveness. A self-claimed lover of Leith, Begbie is a defender of his mates (“Ye back up yir mate” (298)), but, at the same time, is viewed by his mates as a misogynist, junk-like habit, and an intolerable psychopath who “baseball-bat[s] every fucker that’s different” (78). Hardly any critic explores the rich layer of friendship in Welsh’s novel, going only so far as to disregard male friendship as adolescent and immature, an intermediary step towards a mature adulthood fulfilled by domestic (heterosexual) coupledness. At first glance, mates in this novel are at best a means to hide their insecure and vulnerable masculinity in the guise of “a powerful brotherhood” (44). Hence, the more drunken and hopeless they become, the “greater need to belong to each other” (266) there is. Far from being beneficial, they actively harm each other. Johnny Swann and Sick Boy are extremely selfish and take advantage of friends for their schemes, hoaxes, and drug and pimping businesses. And Begbie constantly reminds Renton of the latter’s “insanity of being a friend of a person he obviously dislikes” (142), although Renton dares not walk away from the Scottish Hard Man code based on fear and loyalty (“he’s mate n aw. Whit kin ye dae” (84)). Even the most compassionate and warm-hearted of all, Renton and Spud can be helplessly self-centered under the influence of drugs. A tragic turn of destiny, Renton’s kind cook for Tommy, who is miserable from the breakup with his girlfriend, initiates Tommy in a junkie life and leads to his horrible, lonesome death. The “Courting Disaster” episode is a turning point in which Renton sees his best mates for what they are and feels sickened

at “what we’d aw come tae” (174), foreshadowing his final rip-off: “Ah’m surrounded by the cunts thit ur closest tae us; but ah’ve nivir felt so alone” (175). From the view of multicultural liberalism, Renton’s betrayal of his mates is a necessary step to be freed from the confines of antiquarian tribal bondage in order to become a citizen of the world, and is “almost virtuous” (343) as Renton finds his ripping off mates like Begbie.

In spite of all the harm done to each other, my contention is that *Trainspotting* begins an exploration of ethical friendship that its sequel, *Porno*, completes by hinting at a new ethical notion of friendship as conceptualized by Derrida, friendship that is beyond the political distinction between friend and enemy. An ethic of friendship that is not based on utility but on forgiveness (embodied in the oddly touching love-hate relationship between Renton and Begbie) will be discussed later in this chapter. Suffice it to mention here that the compelling dynamic of love and hatred, the “fierce love and fiercer hatred” (Burnside) between Renton and his lot in *Trainspotting* and *Porno*, is not only indicative of the Scottish masculinity handled by universal-liberal capitalism, but also suggestive of an alternative model of male camaraderie that is not interested in eliminating differences and antagonism between them. To adapt Žižek’s words, their friendship does not shut down each Other’s (often violent and seemingly immoral) *jouissance* in the name of the harmonious One. As Renton tells of Sick Boy, “We’re best mates but we’ve hit each other before...Nowt serious, jist sort ay lashing out in anger. Mates kin dae that” (52). Even though Renton detests Sick Boy for the latter’s occasional pimping, drug-dealing, and extorting, he regrets his bad-mouthing of him that “it wis oot ay order...Sick Boy hus his anxieties, his personal pain” (208). Their

interaction at the end of the “Strolling Through the Meadows” episode narrated by Spud is peculiarly illuminating:

He [Renton] likesay, grabs a haud ay us [Spud] n hugs us. –Yir one ay the best, man. Remember that. That’s no drink n drugs talkin, that’s me talkin. It’s jist thit ye git called aw the poofs under the sun if ye tell other guys how ye feel aboot them if yir no wrecked...

Ah slaps his back, n it’s likesay ah want tae tell him the same, but it would sound, likesay, ah wis jist sayin it cause he sais it tae me first. Ah sais it anyway though.

We hear Sick boy’s voice at oor backs. –You two fuckin buftie-boys. Either go intae they trees n fuck each other, or come n help us find Beggars n Matty.

Wi break oor embrace n laugh. Wi both ken that likesay Sick Boy, for aw the cat’s desire tae rip open every binliner in toon, is one ay the best n aw. (161)

One may well wonder how to make friends with these “bad” boys. As Badiou argues, in the context of today’s multiculturalism, the “celebrated ‘other’ is acceptable only if he is a *good* other” (2001; 24). Renton and his mates illustrate a potential to become friends with the “bad” Other without removing the other’s alterity. In *Working-Class Fiction: from Chartism to Trainspotting*, Ian Haywood laments that the characters of *Trainspotting* has “absolutely no interest in the ideals of liberty, equality, or fraternity (indeed, Rent Boy betrays his friends and absconds all their money)” (158). Haywood’s view, shared by some other critics, fails to notice the oppressive homogeneity assumed in the notion of fraternity and the stronger knot tying Renton’s mates, what I would call a “sharing.” On the boat to Amsterdam at the end of the novel, Renton feels guilty of “rip[ping] off his best mates” (343):

He thinks about Sick boy, and all the things they went through together. They had shared some good times, some awful times, *but they had shared them*. Sick Boy would recoup the cash; he was a born exploiter. It was the betrayal. He could see Sick Boy's more-hurt-than-angry expressions already. (my italics, 342)

Renton's sense of guilt soon subsides and is replaced with a feeling of terror and excitement at the prospect of a new life in Amsterdam. But this notion of "sharing," to view one's mate as part of one's life regardless of the mate's good and bad, anticipates the cleverly-conceived (hilarious and touching) reunions of Renton and Simon, and Renton and Begbie in *Porno*. The name "best mate" Renton and his friends constantly call each other could sound empty and even manipulative, considering the brutal ways they treat each other. But their belief in this name, I argue, is what makes Renton's ripping off such a powerful betrayal in *Trainspotting*, and is what makes an equally powerful healing possible in *Porno*, which I read as profoundly ethical.

Deterritorializing out of local friendship, though such act of betrayal can be justified for "bad" mates, would mean to be reterritorialized in cosmopolitan individualism, characterized by the figure of the consumer who tries in vain to assuage his or her loneliness with mindless consumption. If seemingly liberating deterritorializations are inevitably followed by Capital-serving reterritorializations, how could one achieve an ethical Act in the Lacanian sense of the word—not a mere transgression assuming the dominance of the Law, but a radical breakup with the Law without literally killing oneself? To this difficult question, Deleuze and Guattari respond that the two solutions of "extermination" and "integration" (472) are impossible. Rather, the answer lies in "leaving the plan(e) of capital":

[M]inorities do not receive a better solution of their problem by integration, even with axioms, statutes, autonomies, independences. But if they are revolutionary, it is because they carry within them a deeper movement that challenges the worldwide axiomatic... But as long as the working class defines itself by an acquired status, or even by a theoretically conquered State, it appears only as “capital,” a part of capital (variable capital), and does not leave the *plan(e) of capital*. At best, the plan(e) becomes bureaucratic. On the other hand, it is by leaving the plan(e) of capital, and never ceasing to leave, that a mass becomes increasingly revolutionary... (original italics 473)

For Deleuze and Guattari, if “a State of erratic workers, a State of the ‘refusal’ of work” does not constitute a viable State culturally, politically, economically, it is because “the State-form is not appropriate to them, nor the axiomatic of capital, nor the corresponding culture” (Ibid.). To blend the thoughts of Deleuze and Guattari and Lacan, I argue that Renton’s ripping off his mates constitutes his ethical Act to leave the plan(e) of capitalism. As Renton’s quitting heroin is ethical, not because he outgrows it but because he rejects heroin as part of commodity culture, Renton’s betrayal of his mates is ethical not because he becomes a mature individual but because he debunks an ideology of friendship based on utilitarian value.

Inasmuch as junkie culture and the “immature” local male bonding are the ideological products of multicultural capitalism, Renton’s betrayal embodies the death drive against the capitalist Law, an ethical pursuit of the “excess” that will not result in any good (what awaits him in Amsterdam is the life of an exile and paranoid), but that will challenge the life/death binary as prescribed by society. In a world where there is “no value beyond the market” (Sinfield xxxix), the notion of life and death is far from value-free. One of *Trainspotting*’s many achievements lies in calling into question the binary of these two ideologically loaded terms. The current discourse on life and death

invests moral absolutes in each, and depicts life as exclusively life-affirming or conducive to the oppressive biopower, and death as the fearful apocalypse to be delayed or liberatory transgression. *Trainspotting*'s "choice" of not choosing life, however, should not be automatically translated into choosing death; more than anything, it satirizes the rhetoric of choice made up by society. Spud states at Matty's funeral: "Ah've been tae too many funerals fir a gadge ma age" (298). It is true that the "death wish" (203) prevails in the lives of Renton and his mates; in the songs they hear; drugs they take knowing that they can kill; and the rejection of "straight" life stripped of "the demon, the bad bastard, the radge inside ay me who shuts down ma brain" (300). Notwithstanding, Welsh's novel by no means glorifies or sentimentalizes biological death as a plausible defiance to the mainstream assertion of life, which is exemplified by painful deaths, such as Billy Renton's in Ireland, a case of "an ignorant victim ay imperialism" (209), and the baby Dawn's death from the carelessness of junkie adults.

Similarly, life is often derided, especially through the comic characterization of the "Young Simon," who represents the "Just say no [to heroin]. It's easy. Choose Life" (197) spirit, on the surface, at least. Simon is the "charm itself" and "conspicuous success" (Ibid.) to Renton's gullible parents. But life, when devoid of ideological connotations, is still valuable and is celebrated in a most unexpected way in Welsh's novel. In the "Bad Blood" episode, the HIV positive Davie revenges on Alan Venters, the malicious infector, by brutally murdering his five-year-old son Kevin—all staged perfectly to shock Venters to death. After evoking a great catharsis through this performance, Davie asserts, "Life is beautiful" (262). The spectra of life and death

illustrated in *Trainspotting* destabilizes the life/death binary and suggests the death drive which, having little to do with life or death, seeks for a symbolic death, an ethical Act of leaving the realm of the social.

Renton's leaving behind his mates and Scotland should be distinguished from "choosing" another ideology, cosmopolitan individualism in this case. While *Trainspotting*'s presentation of the drug culture and Renton and his mates' lives are permeated by capitalist strategies of de- and reterritorialization, Renton's final act of betrayal is not reterritorialized in order to metamorphose him into a transnational consumer engaged in a mature heterosexual relationship, an ideal figure of multicultural capitalist society. The ending of Welsh's novel leaves Renton's future blank, and as *Porno*'s opening episodes show, Renton, after nine years, still suffers from the paranoia of being caught and struggles to stick to a relationship with a German girl Katrine although "there's nothing left to stick out" (78). What Renton has betrayed is the terms of friendship, and national and class "identities," be it individualist or communitarian, that merely serve the Symbolic of global capitalism. His betrayal is ethical because ethics is by nature "far from comfortable" (58). To quote Župančič's thought intertwining the moral duty of Kant's categorical imperative and Lacan's ethic of the Real outside the Symbolic Law, ethics is "not in the dimension of the law nor the dimension of a simple transgression of the law" (Ibid.). An ethical Act aims at locating the realm of the Real, if all we can expect from such an Act is social death and, more importantly, the "incomprehensibility of moral imperative" (Kant 66) or "the impossibility of the Real" (235). Renton's imperative to leave has nothing to do with a

“pervert who hides the enjoyment he derives from betrayal behind a supposed respect for the Law” (60), nor with the intention to serve any supreme Good, what Lacan calls “the service of goods” (1997; 303). Renton’s Act of ripping off embodies the death drive against capitalism dependent upon friendly exchange-exploitation, but his death drive ironically affirms his will-to-life after he has returned from a near-death experience from drug abuse. Daniel Cho explains of this paradox that “to embrace the death drive is to paradoxically die symbolically in order to return to living” (28). Inasmuch as the Lacanian death drive assures us that “there is something beyond the current symbolic order” (Ibid.), it gives us the new terms to fight once again for life uninflected by the Law, a fight that is quintessentially ethical. In this sense, Renton’s betrayal—his fight for death—is his fight for life.

Boyle’s film version of *Trainspotting* concludes on a “marketing or monetary note” (Cardullo 161), which has incited much hostile criticism and an equal amount of defenses. While British film critics such as Monk and Murray note that the film’s ending voiceover is not without irony, most critics agree that Renton “chooses life” by leaving his under-class life at the end. With his smiling face closed up, Renton narrates:

So why did I do it? I could offer a million answers, all false. The truth is that I’m a bad person, but that’s going to change, I’m going to change. This is the last of this sort of thing. I’m cleaning up and I’m moving on, going straight and choosing life. I’m looking forward to it already. I’m going to be just like you: the job, the family, the fucking big television, the washing machine, the car, the compact disc and electrical tin opener, good health, low cholesterol, dental insurance, mortgage, starter home, leisurewear, luggage, three-piece suit, DIY, game shows, junk food, children, walks in the park, nine to five, good at golf, washing the car, choice of sweaters, family Christmas, indexed pension, tax exemption, clearing the gutters, getting by, looking ahead, to the day you die.

In spite of the above list of bourgeois diversions, Renton's explosive chant reveals that what he has really done is "to choose one poison over another, the slow-acting rather than the fast, the pecuniary material high instead of the bankrupt mental one" (Cardullo 162). To opt for individual comfort ("the service of goods") over a life (and death) of drug addiction among friends exposes a rush toward another death—not a positive death drive promising a better life after death, but an extermination soon to be achieved by "bourgeois-induced oblivion" (Cardullo 161). Renton's half ambitious, half taunting proclaim, "I'm going to be just like you," uncovers his inability to escape from the human condition dominated by the axiom of capitalism. Simultaneously, this very proclamation makes a penetrating criticism on the life of a consumer, a living death or life-in-death, swamped in meaningless stuffs "to the day you die."

Porno

In the Conclusion of *The Ethics of the Real: Kant, Lacan*, Župančič explains that the encounter with the Real, achieved by the death drive, is actually "impossible" (235). Although Župančič's stronger point is that "the impossibility of the Real does not prevent it from having effect in the realm of the possible" (Ibid.), such an encounter remains what Badiou calls a momentary "event" and is not here to stay. By definition, we reside in the realm of the Symbolic, whereas the Real designates the pre-cultural, pre-discursive, and pre-linguistic *jouissance* that has been lost in the process of our entering the Symbolic, our acquiring language, in Lacan's words, "(m)/Other's tongue." In this sense, *Trainspotting*'s powerful invocation of the death drive in the form of

betrayal, which I contend is the only “outside” to the mainstream society, risks proving to be an impossible and impracticable dream, “an elusive ‘beyond’” (Butler 1987; 215). This raises an important question of postmodernist and poststructuralist discourses on the location of rebellion against the social. Following Lacan and Deleuze, critics such as Edelman and Hardt and Negri propose radical theses that revolution must stem from the wholesale rejection of the neat social distinction between right and left via the death drive (Edelman), and from the Deleuzean nomad, whose desire to evacuate the locus of power abdicates the social (Hardt and Negri). These critics’ arguments, acute and compelling as they are, are often critiqued for their idyllic notions of revolution. For instance, Hardt and Negri call it “a project of love” (413). It is for this reason that Judith Butler places Lacan and Deleuze, despite their striking differences, within the same constellation on the basis of an “Acadian vision of precultural libidinal chaos” (215).

The transition from *Trainspotting* to *Porno*, the change of anti-cultural strategy from the original to the sequel, provides a felicitous case through which to rethink this question in a fruitful way. If *Trainspotting*, reminiscent of mid-1980s, presents a bleak world of unemployed junkies predominated by the lethal—physically from AIDS and mentally from Thatcherism—*Porno*’s “life-affirming, death-denying bourgeois dreamworld” (336) at the turn of the third millennium appears ruled by imperatives of Enjoyment and Entertainment. In *Trainspotting*, Renton retorts to a “fuckin spineless Labour/Tory Party servile wankboy” that the latter is mistaken in thinking “the Labour Party’s goat a fuckin chance ay ever getting in again this century” (238). It did come true soon enough, but Tony Blair’s government is no less entrepreneurial than the

previous one and is referred to in terms of business partnership. For Paul Keramalindous in Leith Business Against Drugs Organisation, Simon decides “to be Gordon Brown to his Tony Blair...[setting himself] into a fiscally prudent, dour Scot mode” (253). In reflecting Welsh’s post-punk and post-hippie disillusionment (who went to the prestigious Heriot-Watt business school for doing an MBA), *Porno* appears to describe the late capitalist world—seemingly affluent yet intrinsically oppressive—with little challenge, or, rather too pleasurable. Indeed, in a world where “cocaine, speed, poverty and media mind-fucking, capitalism’s weapons of destruction are more subtle and effective than Nazism’s” (384), no practice of anti-capitalist rebellion seems possible.

I would argue, however, that *Porno* “rips off” capitalism once again, succeeding *Trainspotting*, through its satire of the ethos of capitalism. As the title of the last chapter of *Gender Trouble* “From Politics to Parody” suggests, Butler argues for the need to find practices that would subvert the Law *within*, “not through the strategies that figure a utopian beyond, but through the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of precisely those constitutive categories” (1990; 34), and suggests parody as a means of exposing gender norms’ constructedness and performativity. In a similar way, *Porno* unfolds the comic drama of Simon, whose complete immersion in capitalist values (and whose being duped by it) uncover the hollowness of the norms of capitalism in a hilarious way. In her recent philosophical study of comedy, Zupančič characterizes comedy as a genre of copula, whose comic effects spring from the clash between two incompatible realities, the Real of human desire and the Master-Signifiers of the Symbolic. According to Zupančič, comedy is not an ideological genre that facilitates a

“positive thinking” and “feel-good” society, but an ethical genre that candidly illuminates the incongruity of human desire at odds with the Symbolic Law. Stuck between two different levels, such as “high-low, soul-body, mind-matter, human-animal, ideals-reality, culture-vulgarity, high aims-low needs” (111), the comic figure emerges as comic when s/he does not see the incongruity of the Real and blindly believes in the Symbolic as the only reality; in short, to borrow Lacan’s words, a comic figure is not a pathetic “chap who believes that he is a king” but “a king who believes that he really is a king” (32). A parodic portrayal of current society and its pseudo-moral preoccupation with happiness and goodness, *Porno* powerfully embodies this comic spirit through its protagonist Simon. His blind trust in business “ethics”—merely an ethical ideology shoring up capitalism—invokes a brilliant comic effect precisely because he believes that he really is a proper businessman, which makes him the greatest dupe. Inasmuch as the misleading trustworthiness of trust is shattered by Renton’s rip-off of Simon at the end, *Porno* once again fulfills Welsh’s anti-capitalist project, reusing the theme of the ethical betrayal.

What makes comedy an apt genre for critiquing contemporary “feel-good” society as depicted in *Porno* is because, a commentator on Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Roses* argues, “Laughter is the condition of ideology” (qtd. in Zupančič 4). Laughter hides the fact that such virtues as “freedom and free will, humor, a ‘positive attitude,’ and a distance towards all ideologies have become the principal mode of the dominant ideology” (Ibid.). According to the logic of today’s “bio-morality” (Ibid.), a good person is the one who feels good, and a bad person is the one who feels bad: the logic

responsible for the mass production of Hollywood comedy films. Zupančič elucidates that the true comedy, however, has nothing to do with a climate that “praises so highly all sorts of entertainment, promotes happiness as its Master-Signifier, and...the imperative of entertainment, positive thinking” (8). Rather, the realism of a true comedy lies in its comic exposition of the extent to which its characters are, opposite to their beliefs, irreparably predicated in the dictum of the capitalist Symbolic. Welsh’s novel constitutes a true comedy in Zupančič’s definition of the word. The dictation of capitalism in *Porno* is rampant to the point of being ludicrous, yet also as “naturalized” and unremarkable as its characters’ addiction to cocaine and Ecstasy. Capitalism manifests itself on many levels in Welsh’s novel, both consciously and unconsciously, from the Armani suit and Versace shirt that “Simone de Bourgeois” (241) clads himself in on a daily basis, to the new academic field of media studies and the “split narrative” of video games that Nikki Fuller-Smith, film student at Edinburgh University and the new starlet of Simon’s porn movie, *Seven Rides for Seven Brothers*, is taught to read as “the new literature” (25). Simon and Nikki are not without insights into the world they live in. Simon laments that London’s Soho could be anywhere, calling it “an Ikea-bland monument to our lack of imagination” (19), and looks down on wine-pouring people in Amsterdam who, without taste, mistake “leisure and relaxation” for “civilization” (134). A “Jungian” like most “modern intelligent women” (461), Nikki preaches that “[i]f the word in the eighties was ‘me’, and in the nineties ‘it’, in the millennium it’s ‘ish’.

Everything has to be vague and qualified. Substance used to be important, then style was everything. Now it’s all just faking it” (374). While Simon and Nikki realize the vast

homogenizing effect of postmodern consumerism, their difference from Spud, who tries to talk his kid out of drinking a McDonald's milkshake ("all sugar, evil globalization n aw that" (352)), is that this ambitious couple accepts the capitalist reality as a given and, quite comically, do not doubt that they are *above* it.

Simon and Nikki's belief that they know better than those in "studentland" (40) is amply demonstrated in their pop philosophies and smart-sounding aphorisms. "It's porn that made the Internet" (83), "We live in an anal society" (177), and "money gives you the luxury of not caring about it" (405) are some of Simon's aphorisms, largely lifted from his coke-fuelled rants. Simon's analysis of man as the Master-Signifier of the consumer and his analogy between advertising and pornography has some sense in it, but the overall effect is that of a farce for the all-knowing tone Simon puts on in discussing "tits and arse":

[W]e need tits and arse because they have got to be available to us; to be pawed, fucked, wanked over. Because we're men? No. Because we're consumers. Because those are things we like, things we intrinsically feel or have been conned into believing will give us value, release, satisfaction. We value them so we need to at least have the illusion of their availability. For tits and arse read coke, crisps, speedboats, cars, houses, computers, designer labels, replica shirts. That's why advertising and pornography are similar; they sell the illusion of availability and the non-consequence of consumption. (450)

Simon, seeing "enough death in the schemes and inner city through the Aids epidemic of the eighties to be robbed of such innocent notions" (336), believes himself superior to naïve, "pampered rich cunts who've had silver spoons in their gubs" (333). Less a "snob" than a "socialist," he is "just playing the politics of the business world" (442) in order to survive in "the new capitalist order" (170). But Simon's project to turn Leith

into “a sexy, hot young bitch and pimp that dirty wee hoor oot for aw she’s fuckin worth. In a word: business” (60), along with his amusing yet nonsensical idea of a Leith theme-pub chain, lacks any original thoughts. Simon’s ideas merely exemplify “the cultivated normalization of human thought and experience through the media, information technology and management accountancy” (Goodchild 2002; 8). Similarly, Nikki dismisses her feminist roommate Lauren as a “closet lesbo frigid little moralizer” (93) and “a small-town prude who needs a good shagging” (28), and is not ashamed of performing blow jobs in Miss Argentina Latin Sauna and Massage Parlor. Nikki thinks that she understands feminism and capitalism better than others insofar as her sex work represents “the most basic formulas” of capitalism better than “Adam Smith’s pin factory” (88). Nonetheless, Nikki’s motivation to be a porn star is not to assert “pussy power” (312) but to make up for her poor self-esteem. Despite all her beauty, intelligence, and social skills, Nikki is entirely enslaved to the media-induced ideal of cover-girl youth and beauty, and remains neurotic about becoming old and “ugly” and not being “IN THE MAGAZINES” (66). Hence, her recognition of Kant’s magnificent line, “The starry heavens above me and the moral law within me” (217), from Simon’s casual observance is less impressive than laughable due to her misled admiration of Simon; he knows the verbatim from a Nick Cave song. Nikki is a charming character who knows how to use literary references, comparing her middle-aged lover/professor Colin to Bloom in *Ulysses*, Juice Terry to Mr. Price in *Mansfield Park* (155), and the ostracized Simon to Oscar Wilde who “eat[s] his chop alone” (390). Nevertheless, Nikki lets herself be subjugated to Simon’s abuse and her own misconception about

pornography. All in all, despite Simon and Nikki's comprehension of the rules of the capitalist game, all they testify to is the current ethos of thought, which Goodchild argues is "constructed as a market":

In such a market, validity is constituted by exchangeability [rather than by meaning]. Those thoughts which offer themselves for general consumption, which satisfy base interests, which flatter the complacency of the consumer, which gratify desires, which devalue alternatives, are those which can circulate the most freely. Thus, in a sovereign market of thought, consensus reality is built upon delusion, greed and hatred. (2002; 250).

Goodchild's argument helps us to explain Simon and Nikki's clever speeches throughout the novel. Simon's justification of his greed and exploitation in the name of "class war" and "the battle of the sexes" (483), and Nikki's post-feminist assertion that "the only industry in the world where you [a woman] have that control to any meaningful extent is pornography" (69), merely repeat some of the most "marketable" thoughts circulating in a capitalist society.

These thoughts "in vogue" become dominant because of their appeal to the Consumer, and some of them are particularly valued up to comprise an "ethic," a pseudo-moral set of values in service of the status quo. Goodchild elucidates the ways in which certain abstract values, such as "liberty, toleration, progress, wealth, and right," become "general equivalents" (250) through repetition and exchange. These "absolutes," against which all others are measured, build the Symbolic of capitalism via their "liturgical performance of symbols" (Ibid.). In contemporary society in which capitalism functions as "a religion in thought itself" (249), business or professional ethics prevail as a moral guide to its members. It is indeed worth noting today's

obsession with morality in professional and business fields, well exemplified by the sheer number of publications in the fields; the numbers of books found under the subheadings of “business ethics” and “professional ethics” amount to over 1,500. From a discussion of moral issues raised among tea-dealers in the India House in 1785 on to moral dilemmas and resolutions concerning almost all modern professions, including counseling, engineering, law, medicine, research, economics, real estate, accounting, entrepreneurial management, education, librarianship, archaeology, and public policy, to name several, the remarkably wide range of fields covered in these publications reflect people’s strong wish to be successful *and* Good at the same time, without hurting others too much. But in the “affluent society” where “the two-thirds of the world constitute[s] the ‘margins’ of global capitalism” (Goodchild 2002; 7), and where such affluence is “predicated on the death, destruction, and domination of a great majority of people” (Cho 23), ideological, economical, and cultural neo-colonialism is inevitable. The capitalist-imperialist’s pursuit of the Good at best takes the form of condescending tolerance. For example, one of the numerous books of the kind, *Korean Etiquette and Ethics in Business*, enumerates various “strange” Korean customs—such as the popularity of saunas among businessmen, prevalent underground deals called “back-paying,” Korean people’s delicate relationship with the Japanese, Koreans’ pride in 5,000 years of their race’s history, etc.—that western businessmen must be acquainted with in order to close a deal. Under an agenda matching good ethics to good business, the ethics in this preposterous book is confined to “how-to” not make cultural faux-pas that could endanger business, and has nothing to do with ethics in the true sense of the

word. Along with bio-ethics, human rights, multiculturalism, and the NGOs, business and professional ethics are what Badiou condemns as “ethical ideologies” (2001; 58). An accomplice to the domination of the status quo, ethical ideologies are not entitled to the name of ethics and merely show a “genuine nihilism” and a “threatening denial of thought as such” (3).

In the contemporary “market” of thoughts, “trust” is one of the values that “sell” the best, presumably for its trustworthiness without the burden of proof. In *Leaders on Ethics*, a collection of essays written by a number of the CEOs of United States-based global corporations, Gerald Grinstein, CEO of Delta Airlines, stresses the necessity of trust in these “trying times”:

I think that as a company we are extremely conscious of the need for trust in a world where people have lots of choices...so if we are going to be a retail business and draw people in to use our services, they are going to have to trust us. Yes, they are going to want quality. They’re going to want comfort and service and so on. But they have to trust that they are going to have it flight in and flight out. (77)

In contrast, in a recent non-fiction work entitled *Trust*, Alphonso Lingis, philosopher known for his translations of Lévinas’ monographs, illuminates an ethical significance of comprising a “community of those who have nothing in common” based on trust. For a global capitalist, however, the abstract value of trust makes a perfect moral-ideological slogan that disguises “free” global market’s manipulation and extortion in the name of business ethics.

Simon’s shallow emphasis on trust—shallow because he is ready to betray it the moment it does not work for his gain—is an excellent example of a mercantilist appropriation of trust into a mere rhetoric of “legitimate” business operations. If the

protagonist of *Trainspotting*, the young, slightly mischievous Renton, looks at his mates and society as a detached outsider in the original novel, *Porno*'s main character Simon is entirely taken in by the narrative of global capitalism to the point that he believes he is nothing but a legitimate businessman with "a product...to trade" (446), even though his business is to produce a seedy porno, financed by a scheme to hack into Rangers Supporters account money. What he does not realize is that he is purely performing a Universal Signifier of the "metropolitan swashbuckler" (47) in what he himself unwittingly yet aptly calls "the compelling drama that is Simon David Williamson" (163). In this one-man comedy, Simon sets up an extremely egotistic binary that causes everything to come down to the war between "[c]ategory one: me" and "[c]ategory two: the rest of the world" (478). A few examples: a businessman like himself vs. "schemies" from "the underclass" (254-55) like other porn crews; himself, who "capitalize[s] and go[es] legit" (448) vs. "the likes of Begbie...victims and losers" (446); himself, who believes that "if you're running a proper business, a real operation, ye need trust" (483) vs. Renton, "treacherous ginger-headed cunt" (124), "rip-off merchant" (168), and a "Scruffy Murphy with a brain and even fewer morals" (483); and Simon's many other horrible discriminative remarks bolstering "the class war," "the battle of the sexes," and "my tribe" (483), "magnifico Italia" (168). Simon's principles, however, turn out to be a thin veneer that masks his total lack of trust, honesty, and legitimacy. Although Simon despises Renton as a "desperate junkie who lucked out once" (421), Simon actually "env[ies] him" for moving out of the working class, and tries "to be [a traitor] like him" (170). Simon repeats to Renton that his businesses are not "about money" but "about

expression, about self-actualisation, about living” (333). These words sound nice but empty because he “shiver[s]” at the rapturous feeling of the “heights, depths and breadth of [his] deceit” (204), and admits that he is a money-hoarding schemie when he advises his victim Paul Keramalindous—his yuppie adman partner in “a moral crusade” against drugs—to “[n]ever trust a schemie with a wad” (270). Thus, for all his glib philosophy on business rules, Simon is merely a performer of businessman, switching between the two roles of “a nasty boorish ten-a-penny thug” and “the cool entrepreneurial type” (373) depending on situations. Simon is a main character of a late capitalist drama, who mirthfully parrots ideas à-la-mode while mistaking a soulless pursuit of Capital for “self-actualisation.”

As Renton defends for his “twisted soul brother” (365), however, Simon can be “absolutely honest...under the nihilistic bravado”: “It’s no that he’s such a bad bastard, he’s just ultra fuckin selfish. When you swim with sharks you only survive by being the biggest one” (434). It is far from my intention to brand Simon as a flat evil character not worthy of a main role. Rather, what renders Simon such a strong, fascinating comic protagonist is his passionate yet blind dedication to his social role, which leads Nikki to comment on his over-zealousness when she first meets him: “he looks so painfully sincere that it just has to be an act” (89). Simon’s exceptional acting skills are demonstrated many times in *Trainspotting*, when he seduces foreign girls, talks Renton into his hoaxes, and, most of all, imitates his hero Sean Connery, a former “Edina lad, ex-co-op milk boy” (29) like him. In the sequel, Simon’s versatility in acting—from being able to “do queen” (275), to looking like an alien in *Close Encounters*, to speaking

with a Sean Connery accent at the Adult Film Festival in Cannes—not only invokes great comical effects but also functions as a barometer of Simon’s effectiveness as a beguiling entrepreneur. On their first reunion in nine years in Amsterdam, Renton finds Simon’s usual performance as a hurt, betrayed best mate, which makes Renton feel guilty as always like a “drunken wife-beater” (140), quite entertaining and convincing (“I have tae smile at his performance. I can’t help it, the cunt hasn’t changed a bit” (140). Later in the novel, when Renton learns that Simon has hidden the fact that Begbie was released from prison and looked for him, Renton, enraged, states that “Sick Boy is a compulsive liar and he’s a lot less good at it or entertaining with it than he used to be” (343), thereby foreshadowing Simon’s final humiliation exacted by Renton. When he realizes that he is ripped off again by Renton, Simon is shocked but consoles himself that he is at least better off than Begbie who is hospitalized in a coma: he says this to himself “cruelly...imitating a treacherous Hollywood Roman senator from *Spartacus*” (480). Simon’s performance has become so naturalized as to blur the distinction between himself and the roles he plays. One may wonder how Simon, a successful con-artist who appears to have his “game” under control, can be ripped off by Renton so easily, and may interpret Simon’s abasement as a clichéd result of the *deus ex machina*. Instead, I would argue that Simon’s overconfidence in his performativity, his beliefs that he can fool anybody but himself, is what establishes *Porno* as a comedy in the fullest sense of the word. This is because true comedy, rather than celebrating ignorance as a condition of happiness and satisfaction, reveals that “those who refuse to be duped at any price are the biggest dupes...those who try to make absolutely sure that they do not fall

prey to any appearance, semblance, or illusion are taken in to begin with” (Zupančič 2008; 85). This comprises an apt explanation of Simon’s comic denouement.

Zupančič’s discussion of the comic subject and its “trust in trust” (59) is fundamental to clarifying the comic inherent in the (psychoanalytic) notion of trust. According to Zupančič, the subject’s trust is “not simply something which comes to the place of her knowledge or ignorance, but concerns knowledge of the Other” (85). Hence, those who are obsessed with avoiding all deception and naivety “ultimately blindly believe that the Other knows exactly what she is doing, that is, is perfectly consistent in her existence and actions” (Ibid.). But, of course, the Other is the Other because of its inconsistency and intractability. In addition, the comic subject does not know that real trust is “always redoubled”:

If we trust somebody, say, to return the money we lent him, this trust does not consist in our knowing, or being certain in advance, that we’ll get our money back. It is, rather, that trust always somehow precedes itself, there is something objective or object-like about it...[I]n trust, the object always precedes the subject: trust is first objectified in the very stake, in what I already give the Other, and this is then followed by the subjective side of trust, a “blind faith” in this same metonymic object. (Comic) trust is thus always a trust in trust. (86)

The “‘blind faith’ in the object-cause of the subject’s desire” (Ibid.) can work on occasion precisely due to its blindness, but this blind faith, located in the uncontrollable Other, is never to be trusted. What Simon trusts is his trust in the business partnership that he believes he builds up with Renton, but his trust derives less from the trustworthiness of such partnership (object-cause) than from his subjective desire to trust it. Insofar as the rules of capitalism are neither ethical nor appreciative of Simon’s observance of them, the trust Simon requires of his associates has little to do with a

principle of entrepreneurship but solely reflects his own need to create and abide by such a “trustful” principle. A comical moment is elicited when the subject learns—in a humiliating way—that the subject’s fool-proof trust is nothing but a self-delusion.

Thus, if Simon’s story makes a compelling comedy, it is not one of those misleading, “humanist-romantic” types of comedy, what Zupančič describes as an “intellectual resistance in the form of keeping a distance to all that is going on around us” (4). As opposed to this “ideological” notion of comedy, Zupančič argues that the realism of comedy lies in the “fundamental illogic” of comedy, which is exactly “the very logic of the Real of human desire” (218). The reason comedy is considered to be a “low”—and “obscene”—genre uniquely dependent on the body can be understood in this way as well. This is not only because the genre of comedy originated from rituals of performing phallic songs that honor Dionysus, but also because a comic figure incarnates “indestructible” human desire, whose incongruity and tenacity are posited in comedy as less “painful” than “funnily productive” (217). Simon’s lip service to the necessity of trust in proper business appears hypocritical and pathetic at first, considering his numberless scams and lies, but his oddly naïve faith in his best-buddy routine with Renton and no less “sincere” devotion to his porn movie is strangely moving (not to mention hilarious), and is representative of the profound discrepancy of human desire, an absurd yet unstoppable desire for an unconditional trust in the middle of ripping off. In a slightly different way, Nikki, even after going through the “absolutely sickening” sense of disappointment and betrayal at Simon’s egoistic appropriation of their porn film as written, produced, edited, starred, and directed by

Simon David Williamson, still finds his *wearing* of a “hurt, wounded look” (392) “fucking irresistible” (393). Nikki’s inexplicable desire for Simon, her jumping into a scene of deception *knowingly*, would exemplify this discrepancy of human desire as well, what she rightly calls a “beautiful-horrible moment” (392). To summarize in Zupančič’s words, the Real of human desire, which is best conveyed in the genre of comedy, manifests:

Human beings are composed neither of the biological and the symbolic, nor of the physical and the metaphysical—the image of composition is misleading. Human beings are, rather, so many points where the difference between the two elements, as well as the two elements themselves as defined by this difference, are generated, and where the relationship between the two dimensions thus generated is being constantly negotiated. No pure life or pure Symbolic prior to this curious intersection. (214-15)

Another core of comedy that can be drawn from this quotation is that comedy is essentially “a genre of the copula” (213). As the Phallus that the Greek comedy glorifies symbolizes the missing link between human lives and the Signifier, comedy strives to mediate—or, at least exposes various intersecting points of—the two realities as explained by Zupančič, which is intricately interwoven in human desire. My contention is that *Porno* demonstrates this notion of comedy as a copula(tion) through its portrayal of pornography, none other than the novel’s title.

Whether pornography should be understood as asserting women’s right to bodily pleasure or as objectifying and commodifying the female body for consumption, in other words, whether pornography is “good” or “evil,” is not what interests us here. As *Trainspotting* goes beyond a branding of drug use as either good or bad, *Porno* does not encourage nor preach to ban the multi-billion-dollar industry, but rather shows the

degree to which pornography becomes an object of daily conversation as well as of an academic discourse on culture and society, exemplified by Simon's speech on the subject and by Nikki's (post-)feminist debate with Lauren. Simon, a layman analyst of British society, argues: "People want sex, violence, food, pets, DIY and humiliation... Look at humiliation on television, look at the papers and the mags, look at the class system, the jealous, the bitterness that oozes out of our culture: in Britain, we want to see people get fucked" (179). He also argues that "porn is mainstream now," because young consumers "don't make the distinction now between porn or adult entertainment and mainstream entertainment": as long as "you get a buzz off it" (347), it is mainstream. Simon diagnoses that in a society in which people are "obsessed with anal jokes, anal sex, anal hobbies," "getting fucked is one of the few things left in our lives that is real, that is unconstructed" (178). Simon's justification of the porn business throughout Welsh's novel is both outrageously superficial yet unexpectedly insightful. It is superficial for his social opinions are extremely partial and far-fetched—moreover, he debunks every glorifying word he has said for the "sphere of adult erotica" (479) when the boxes of his film are confiscated by the police: he recants in a vulgar way that porn is "always just a load of shite for wankers who couldn't get a bird to pull off tae and a way for the rest of us hitting our sell-by dates to keep firing into young, fit fanny" (478). Simon's pseudo-philosophy on pornography is nonetheless insightful for the ways in which the imperative of consumerism *creates* the *raison d'être* of an industry as abusive as pornography, and legitimizes the porn industry by incorporating it to the (Foucauldian notion of) discourse.

For my purpose, however, I want to focus on Simon's view that "getting fucked" is one of the few things that is "real" and "unconstructed." Makers as well as viewers of pornography, including Simon, are fully aware of the formulaic nature of it, which renders Simon's remark on the "real" sex no more than a self-serving excuse for his business, like many other preposterous aphorisms he invents in order to meet his agenda. But, if we take into account another connotation of "getting fucked"—for example, being shafted in addition to having an intercourse—Simon's concept of pornography offers a basis of a best comedy which, in illustrating real bodily copulations, embodies the witty copula between physical interaction and the metaphysical struggle: who is on top of whom and who is fooling and dominating who. This, I argue, is the very spirit of the comic copula that dramatizes the Real of the possessive and "foolish" human desire. In contrast to the sex in real lives that is merely a "genital interaction," pornography's attraction, Simon explicates, lies in its depiction of the comprehensive "social and emotional process" (249). Hence, for a good porn, it is essential that its sexual "expressions cover all emotional bases" so as to satisfy every viewer, from "misogynistic power merchants who 'want to see the bitch suffer'" to a "lazy transgressive romantic yuppette who's had a hard day at the office and just wants to lie back and enjoy a relaxing butt-fuck" (Ibid.). Degrading and calculating as they sound, these words are noteworthy for they demonstrate a crux of pornography as a battlefield between the Universal Signifier of romantic sex and Lacanian *jouissance*. If pornography, as a (not entirely detrimental) art form, has no other goal than pursuing erotic desire no matter what the pursuit costs (humiliation, destruction etc.), pornography

as an industry may best represent the law of capitalism that neatly compartmentalizes various human desires according to “marketing” categories, creates overflowing demands, and increases supplies, while leaving the master narrative of the supremacy of family intact. In short, pornography is a site of the struggling copula(tion) between *jouissance*, what Lacan defines as “what serves no purpose,” and the Law of utility that “divide[s] up, distribute[s], or reattribute[s] everything that counts as *jouissance*” (1997; 3).

Pornography as a site of comic deception, triggered by the gap between the Law and *jouissance*, is evinced by Nikki’s debasing experience of it as well. As opposed to Lauren, a feminist-student who believes in “knowledge for its own sake” and criticizes Nikki for her penchant for the “Thatcherite paradigm of running down the arts and just making everything vocational” (41), Nikki sees arts degrees as a “clutch of parasitic drones” (40) and is “fed up studying film when [she’s] got the opportunity to make one” (266). Representative of a post-feminist view, Nikki is full of clever remarks: “I don’t think porn per se is the real issue. I think it’s how we consume” (266). Nikki’s excitement of “being part of something” (273) and ambition to be “innovative with non-sexist dialogues and themes” (178) in co-scripting *Seven Rides for Seven Brothers*, however, is crushed—along with her fascination with Simon—as the narrative of pornography is highly mechanical, not to mention degrading to female performers (“our sequential journey: blow jobs, frigging, licking oot, fucking, different positions, anal, double penetration and, finally, the cum shot” (250)). In performing prescribed roles, Nikki comes to stand for a generic name of Sex-goddess-“ship,” a Universal Signifier

devoid of any excessive, uncharted orgasm called *jouissance*. Thus, it is when Nikki, while saying “I loathe being a fake” (374), adamantly identifies herself as “an actress, a fucking star” (444) that she becomes a comic character completely fooled by her own desire to be a star. On the other hand, “Juice” Terry Lawson is someone for whom “shagging for the camera” and enjoying it, what Nikki despises as a poor performance befitting a “stag,” is much more important than following the rules of a “proper adult movie” (244). Reprimanding him for his “atrocious” (244) acting, Simon has to constantly remind Terry of the Universal role of “cocks” that a male porn star must perform: “This isnae about you having a good fuck, Terry, it’s about you *looking as if* you’re having a good fuck. Think hireys! Think art!” (original italics 247); “Remember, Terry, this is not sex. This is acting, this is performance. It doesnae matter whether you’re enjoying it or not...we’re just cocks. That’s all we are” (original ellipsis 250). Terry’s failure to perform the Universal Signifier of the Cock, due to his own ecstatic “spice ay life” (250) overrunning the generic boundary of pornography, would make a superb testimony of pornography (and of comedy, to extend my argument) as a copula of two conflicting principles: the reality principle and the pleasure principle in Freudian terms.

To examine the comedy of *Porno* in relation to Renton’s final betrayal, if Renton’s rip-off in *Trainspotting* is less comic than mind-blowing for its unexpectedly bold move of abandoning the social altogether (his ethical Act), Renton’s leaving for San Francisco with Simon’s share of more than 60,000 pounds in the sequel is ethical insofar as it “rips off” the orderly yet meaningless process of capitalism, incarnated in

the comic characterization of Simon. Renton accurately pinpoints Simon's comic trust in social process:

His effectiveness is curtailed by the fact that he's far too into the process; the intrigue and the social side of it all. He thinks it's important, that it actually means something. So he gets immersed in it all, and never just stops to sit back and remember to do the simple thing. Like taking the money and running. (472)

Mechanical as it may sound, to briefly contemplate the link between capitalism and friendship with regard to the two types of friendship in Welsh's novel, between "Rent boy" and "Sick boy," and Renton and Begbie, would be a most fruitful way to conclude this chapter. Like Renton who is no different from nine years ago, still indecisive throughout the book but taking off with his mate's money at the end, Simon, Begbie, and Spud are none the wiser and happier in *Porno*. Sick Boy's narcissism in *Trainspotting* ("It's me, me, fucking ME, Simon David Williamson, NUMERO FUCKIN UNO" (30)) is still "ehs favourite subject" (109) in the sequel, as Spud wearily notices, and is the source of both his glory as a porn revolutionary and his fall from grace. Spud struggles to get himself straight from drugs and, to everyone's surprise, completes a book manuscript on Leith's history, culminating at the referendum in 1920—the "great betrayal" (147) resulting in Leith's decline ever since. With the manuscript rejected as a farce by a publisher and with his renewed befriending and thieving with Simon ended by the latter's betrayal, Spud remains "a form of humanity that has been rendered obsolete by the new order" (384). "Second prize," Rab McNaughton, who was in the drug scheme with Renton and the other three in *Trainspotting* (but hardly remembered because he was not in Boyle's film), has become a religious fanatic and lives on "the

fervoured fix of evangelical outpourings” (437) that Renton finds as destructive as drug injection. The funnily terrifying “Begbie mythology” (82) of *Trainspotting* not only survives after he is in and out of prison, but actively exerts its power on Renton, Spud, and Simon in the sequel. Simon aptly describes Begbie’s hateful yet compelling presence as follows: “he is such a prick you can’t even hate him. It’s beyond that. The man is beyond love or hate...he simply...*is*” (original ellipsis and italics 456). For Renton, the “Begbie=Evil=Fear” (467) equation persists until the moment he finally sees Begbie (being run over by a car) for the first time in nine years on the last pages of the novel.

Friendship as portrayed in both of Welsh’s novels is too rich and intricate to be called simply wonderful or harmful, amusing or sad. For example, Simon is extremely selfish and manipulates Renton, but it is obvious that Simon thinks of Renton as “his own” (2002; 138), which makes Renton’s ripping him off a real betrayal in Simon’s book. Simon’s “pleading” with Renton when they first reunite in the sequel, “I was supposed tae be yir best mate. Why Mark, why?” (142), is highly pleasing for its performativity, but is also indicative of his genuine wish to know why. Similarly, although Simon would “scream betrayal” (111) whenever needs be, Simon and Renton are “like a pair ay auld queens,” who “bitch and bicker to an impasse before catching some mischief in each other’s eyes and bursting out laughing” (434). Moments of intimacy like this abound in Welsh’s novels, offering one of their charms. Begbie reiterates the “mates” routine no less frequently than Simon: “Renton hud been muh mate. Muh best mate. Fae school. And eh’d taken the fuckin pish. It’s aw been Renton’s

fault. Aw this fukcin rage” (129); “wir no talkin aboot fuckin money here, wir talkin aboot fuckin mates. It’s the fuckin principle ay the thing” (397); “N this is mates thit wir talkin aboot here, or so-called fuckin mates” (416). A huge difference between Simon and Begbie, however, is that Begbie cannot live with his mates’ betrayal, along with the yuppification of Leith full of posh restaurants and shops, and feels hurt and enraged all the time, whereas Simon has moved on and gotten on in the new world order like a “mature” adult. I have discussed earlier in this chapter the ways that Simon represents a potential “citizen of the world” and that Begbie stands for the pathetic Other, still holding on to his mates and Leith (“WE DINNAE GIE UP! WE’RE FUCKIN HIPS! [name of a Leith-based soccer club] WE’RE FUCKIN LEITH” (399)), from the perspective of multiculturalism. I have also hinted that if Renton and Simon’s friendship is a political friendship based on utility, Renton and Begbie’s complicated love-hate relationship beyond utility or similarity, a dynamic that is inexplicable other than in Renton’s girlfriend Diane’s words, “He’s part of your life” (473), opens up an ethical friendship rooted in difference, sharing, and forgiveness. While Renton calls his friendship with Simon a “symbiotic” one of “twisted soul brothers” (365), who shared the cynicism towards and disillusionment by the sordid world since their childhood in the Banannay flats scheme, Begbie, although he grew up with them in the same scheme, symbolizes the raw Other: not the “good” Other tolerated by the multicultural liberalist, but the incomprehensibly “bad” Other, who is violent, misogynistic, intolerable, and simply psychotic, yet who has the power to let himself *be* “beyond love or hate.”

In the very last episode of *Porno*, Simon visits with the comatose Begbie and makes an impassioned (and again, funnily preposterous) speech as to how he, a member of the “righteous, intelligent clued-up section of the working-classes,” has battled against “the brain-dead moronic masses as well as the mediocre, soulless bourgeoisie” (483). In this speech, what Renton has taken away from him is not the “money” but his “dreams” (484). Yet, in the sense that Simon embodies the Universal Signifier of the Entrepreneur, for whom the dream is the synonym of money, Simon’s final “dream” speech, if not without ingenuity, does little but reassert the extent to which his mind is encoded by the capitalist market of thoughts. In contrast, Renton’s final monologue to Begbie a few pages earlier, who was just hit by a car on the verge of catching Renton, reminisces about “all the old times, all the good times” (470) that they shared as young boys and intimates an ethic of friendship uninflected by the capitalist dictation of human intimacy. Holding Begbie in his arms and squeezing his hand, Renton asks the unconscious Begbie for his forgiveness and narrates their numerous childhood memories: “Ah think a lot aboot the laughs we used tae have, the fitba in the Links, how your ma was always good tae me when ah came roond tae yours, ...Mind we used tae go tae the State in Junction Street on Saturday morning for the cartoon shows, or tae that scabby wee cinema at the top ay the Walk, what was it called?...” (471). Through this touching moment followed by Simon’s “dream” soliloquy, *Porno* exhibits two forms of friendship—one comically political/ideological, the other strangely ethical—and envisions an ethic of forgiveness as a post-betrayal possibility.

CHAPTER V

BETRAYED BY BEAUTY:

ALAN HOLLINGHURST'S *THE LINE OF BEAUTY*

[A]rt and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences.

Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*

At the moment we see something beautiful, we undergo a radical decentering.

Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty*

Bourdieu's and Scarry's insolubly antinomic views on art and beauty, that is, what the love of beautiful things means to us, lead to the last theme of this dissertation:

bewilderingly various notions of beauty and the beholder feeling deceived by them.

Bourdieu's sociological analysis of the class-bound concept of taste published in 1984

and Scarry's philosophical meditation on beauty inspired by Greek classics and nature of

1999 by no means represent the protean paradigm of aesthetics, nor do I wish to choose

one aesthetic discourse over another for legitimation.¹ What appears to be intriguing is

that when there exist so many different ways of understanding a single concept—beauty

being the case in point—the beholder is likely to feel betrayed by it eventually.

Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* follows the varied aesthetic experiences of Nick

Guest, a 21-year-old “solemn little blond boy” (14) who “just love[s] beautiful things”

(6). As Nick moves from Oxford University into the posh Notting Hill residence of the

Feddens as a lodger/“guest”/children's friend, he ecstatically enters into mixed pleasures

and dangers that beautiful things involve, from sumptuous upper-class parties to vulgar

yet pleasurable postmodern art-commodities, from beautiful but corrupted people to the grim deaths of loved ones from AIDS. As opposed to the other novels discussed in this dissertation, no major act of betrayal occurs in this novel. But Hollinghurst's unsparing portrayal of beauty entwined with the money, drugs, politics, and AIDS of the Thatcherite eighties portends a deep sense of betrayal felt by Nick *and* a curiously ethical possibility arising from it.

While *The Line of Beauty* does not revolve around a main ethical act of betrayal, it nevertheless illustrates minor events of betrayal in which Nick is invariably cast as the victim. Notably, Gerald Fedden, MP, expels Nick out of his house upon discovering Nick's secret affair with Antoine "Wani" Ouradi. For another example, Wani casually cheats on Nick multiple times in the novel. Distinguished from the novels examined in earlier chapters, whose ethics of betrayal derive from the narrators' challenges to society, the ethical dimension of Hollinghurst's novel is largely revealed by a post-moral reading practice that this novel urges on the reader in considering its morally problematic characters, the passive and uncritical Nick and the glamorous but wanton Wani. In particular, Wani's characterization has been an easy target of moralistic judgment by reviewers. Summarized as "a closeted and cokehead Lebanese millionaire" and "a male Lolita" (Hitchings), Wani exemplifies the "figure of novel beauty" (159) depraved by wealth, sex, and power: three interlocking factors obsessing Thatcher's London in the 1980s. Hollinghurst's vivid depiction of Wani's physical beauty ("the dark curly hair" (68), "the cruel charming curve of his lips" (81), "the usual provocation of his penis" (161), and his "extraordinary eyelashes" (165)), spoiled by his love of

cocaine (“gleaming mucus, flecked with blood and undissolved powder, trailed out of his famous nose” (339)), causes some commentators to feel nothing but “incredulous revulsion” (Ridgeway) towards him. For me, however, Wani’s unbridled desires, the “raw needs of so aloof a man” (191) that surprise and captivate Nick, suggest what Edelman calls “*sinthom*-osexuality,” a term combining the Lacanian word *sinthome* and homosexuality. Defined by Edelman as “stupid enjoyment” (231) and “the access to unthinkable *jouissance* beyond every limit of pleasure” (232), *sinthome*—and its implication of sinfulness—is entailed in homosexuality. Although viewing Wani as embodying *sinthom*-osexuality does not make him a “good” character, this view transmutes Wani’s beauty destined for death by AIDS into an ethical site of expanding thoughts on beauty, pleasure, and death. Here lies “the ethical alchemy of beauty” (Scarry 113) conjured up many times in *The Line of Beauty*.

Insofar as the ethical alchemy of beauty requires beautiful yet “base” materials to be transformed into something refined and invaluable, Hollinghurst’s novel, like the novels by Kureishi, Rushdie, and Welsh I have examined, uses the trope of betrayal in order to rethink “bad” behaviors and “low” gratification, such as promiscuous sex and drug use. In other words, in taking issue with the binary division assumed in the current paradigm of aesthetics between high art and low nature, form and content, and aesthetic and commercial or political, Hollinghurst’s novel refuses to judge the seemingly “distasteful” lives of Nick and his lovers and *betrays* the beauty of such lives on its own terms. Nick borrows from “his hero” (5) Henry James and says, “He [James] hated vulgarity...but he also said that to call something vulgar was to fail to give a proper

account of it” (124). *The Line of Beauty* is an attempt to “give a proper account” of gay sex, which is repeatedly derogated as “vulgar and unsafe” (23, 31, 38, 152, 205, 323) by the “hetero mob” (72) in the novel. Nick, rapturously reminiscing about his first sex with the “so beautifully alien” (35) Leo in Kensington Park Gardens, thinks that “it was so bad, and it was so much the best thing he’d ever done” (36). Redefining what is good, enjoyable, and beautiful to him, Nick remarks: “To apologize for what you most wanted to do, to concede that it was obnoxious, boring, ‘vulgar and unsafe’—that was the worst thing” (152). Nick’s reconceptualization of the good and the beautiful as whatever gives him pleasure, enlivens his thoughts, and intensifies his feelings constitutes what I will call the “queer aesthetic” of *The Line of Beauty*. Not confined to a sexual constituency but loyal to the ethical and political significance of the term “queer,” queer aesthetics means a nonnormative aesthetic unbound by the law of conventional aesthetics, which denies immediate, blended, and submissive satisfaction. In the sense that queer aesthetics does not discriminate, hierarchize, or compartmentalize what is lovely, this new mode of aesthetics is intrinsically ethical. To describe its ethical drive towards equity in the words of Scarry, “an *ethical fairness* which requires ‘a symmetry of everyone’s relation’ will be greatly assisted by an *aesthetic fairness* that creates in all participants a state of delight in their own lateralness” (original italics 114).

In what follows, I begin with an analysis of the ways Hollinghurst’s “exquisitely written” (Hensher) novel and the equally charming world it portrays are intertwined with what John Guillory terms “cultural capital.” According to the logic of cultural capital, the “aesthetic value” of *The Line of Beauty* is no more or other than its canonicity,

consecrated by, among other indicators of aestheticism, the Man Booker prize Hollinghurst won in 2004. Similarly, the marvelous artworks that fascinate Nick in the novel, from the “real Louis Seize commode washstand” (65) in Lord Kessler’s château to Gauguin’s painting in Fedden’s house, are owned by those who can afford them and exhibit their cultural status. Looking at the real Louis Seize commode washstand cut and drilled, Nick remarks with his characteristic tone of pseudo-detachment of an Aesthete that oozes admiration and sarcasm in equal measure: “if you owned dozens of them, you could be as barbarous with them as you liked” (65). While some aspects of flashy postmodern culture and many of the hypocritical heterosexual politicians are satirized, Hollinghurst’s novel shows little interest in severing the connection between art, economy, and politics in order to reclaim “pure” art. That is to say, if the reviewers of the novel have been baffled by Hollinghurst’s integration of high and low—“the high metaphysical language of Wagner” (87) and rough “bumshoving” (33), the mainstream novel of manners and the gay novel, and the elegant style of “the Master” and the “guest” status of the narrator—I argue that *The Line of Beauty* deconstructs these divisions and embraces what Proust calls the “mingled joy” of aesthetic experience (qtd. in Guillory 336). This betrayal of “pure” form and content opens up a new queer aesthetic-ethic by adding the “bad” and “low” pleasures, which result in Nick’s “desubjectivation”—a Lacanian term for the loss of subjectivity—and Leo and Wani’s deaths, to the realm of aesthetics. I discuss the desubjectivation embodied in gay sex using Derrida’s thoughts on the laws of hospitality where the guest turns the host into a hostage. Given that Nick and his lovers are constantly described as children, “boys in a

playground, and perhaps with the same eagerness and confusion” (225), Hollinghurst’s novel ends with the deaths of children. This radical breakup with futurity mirrors Edelman’s resistance to “reproductive futurism.” In addition, the beauty and love of the world reaffirmed on the last page of the novel imagines an alternative narrative of life and beauty invested in “queer time” (Halberstam 2005; 6)—a nonnormative temporality uninflected by longevity and reproduction.

“‘Aesthetic Value’ Is No More or Other Than Cultural Capital.”

John Guillory, *Cultural Capital*

The passage since Kant’s high aesthetics as an independent philosophy in the late eighteenth century to the diminution of aesthetics as subservient to socioeconomics, implied in Guillory’s above words, is long, tortuous, and uneven, generating strikingly disparate insights on the subject.² Although it appears to be a reductive task—also an overwhelming one—to categorize such diverse thoughts on beauty, art, culture, pleasure, and taste, one way to understand the history of aesthetics is to trace the changing views on the autonomy (or, the lack of autonomy) of art. On the one hand, for philosophers such as Nietzsche and Heidegger, art comprises “an autonomous, self-sufficient aesthetic realm lying beyond good and evil” (Glowacka 1). Not only does art hold its own sphere, it is deemed superior to other realms. Heidegger believes that artworks “do not simply represent reality but...open up or uncover the world” (Eagleton 2004; 600). Due to its “world-revealing” nature, art encompasses ethics and resides beyond politics and economics, two spheres that concern the maintenance of a world rather than creating

one. Similarly, for Nietzsche, art is not confined to agreeable objects or professional artists but constitutes “the supreme task and the truly metaphysical activity of this life” (13). On the other hand, a contemporary of Heidegger who is critical of Heidegger’s alleged “archaism,” Adorno, does not idolize art, but emphasizes the role of truly creative artworks forged by inspiring artists in defiance of the mass produced popular culture. In viewing great artworks as essentially antisocial, however, Adorno’s thesis of the 1940s is no less Arcadian than Nietzsche’s and Heidegger’s, and presupposes the autonomous realm of art as opposed to modern consumer society.

Bourdieu’s, Guillory’s, and Eagleton’s studies of aesthetics published between the 1970s and the 1990s provide radically new analyses of aesthetic objects, which these critics argue have never occupied, or will never occupy, an autonomous realm of experience. From Guillory’s perspective, “there is no realm of pure aesthetic experience, or object which elicits nothing but that experience” (336). Interpreting Bourdieu’s work on how cultural taste serves class distinction using the term “cultural capital,” Guillory notes that cultural products, be they aesthetic or popular, cannot be experienced apart from their value as cultural capital, whether it be high or low. Furthermore, it is impossible as well “to experience cultural capital as disarticulated from the system of class formation or commodity production” (Ibid.). From Eagleton’s Marxist perspective, the so-called “autonomization” of art in modern times means precisely “art’s effective demise as a political force” (1990; 368). “Swallowed up by commodity production,” Eagleton argues, art is deprived of its “traditional social functions within church, court and state” and has become “pure supplementarity” (367).

The birth of fin-de-siècle Aestheticism at the turn of the twentieth century as an “independent” field, whose motto reads “art for art’s sake,” therefore occurs at the very moment when “art, like humanity, is utterly, gloriously useless” (370). Recent efforts to synthesize these two branches of thought—a sociological and leftist view of art’s inevitable sociality, and a classical and Nietzschean aesthetics of “life as art”—in the light of ethics will be discussed later in this chapter. Nevertheless, the critique of aesthetic autonomy is instrumental to understanding the “great divide” of class, culture, and taste that saturates the supposedly liberatory multicultural, postmodern, and postcolonial London delineated in *The Line of Beauty*.

The division of society along the lines of class and race presents itself in numerous places in Hollinghurst’s novel. For fleeting examples, the Feddens and Nick sit in their car and hear the reggae music played at the Notting Hill Carnival; Elena, Italian housekeeper of the Feddens, is treated with “a careful pretense of equality” (21). It is in the party scenes of the novel, however, where “[t]aste classifies, and it classifies the classifier” (Bourdieu 6). Written by “one of the best writers of party scenes since F. Scott Fitzgerald” (Upchurch), Toby’s twenty-first birthday party scene at his uncle’s magnificent castle, Hawkeswood, describes a group of Nick’s upper-class and aristocrat friends from Oxford, all of whom are rich, beautiful, smug, and intoxicated with “the newer romance of the pot” (80). Their erudite yet drunken discussion about Hitler and Goebbels and race is less communicative than affirmative of their status, and makes a stark contrast to Nick’s sexual fantasizing about Tristão, a “foreign” waiter from Madeira who has “huge and beautiful” hands (63). At the twenty-fifth wedding

anniversary party of Gerald and Rachel Fedden, “the PM” walks into the scene “at her gracious scuttle, with its hint of a long-suppressed embarrassment, of clumsiness transmuted into power” (328), and the powerful men gathered around her long for their wives “to get lost so [they] can have a hot date with the Lady”; Nick dubs the scene “the fantastic queenery of the men. The heterosexual queenery” (333). In another dinner party at Feddens’, Gerald and his lot made up of homophobic and jingoist politicians and businessmen and their equally inelegant wives with “Diana-style” hairdos listen to Strauss’ orchestral music and Nick’s talk about the Master and art with little understanding. If Nick’s way of getting to know people is “through the sudden intimacy of talk about art and music, a show of sensibility” (127), Gerald and his friends reveal “a vacuum of taste” (109). One of the topics that excites them the most is the Falklands War which, in the words of a cabinet member’s pregnant wife who resembles the PM, is “a Trafalgar Day for our times” (119). This inane “Oxonian burble” (129) is interrupted by the appearance of a cab driver named Brentwood, whose Caribbean accent is “completely and critically different from everything else in the house” (130).

Inasmuch as art and beauty amount more to an obliging backdrop of their power than to an object of appreciation and joy, the “aesthetic pleasure” of Gerald’s lot and Nick’s Oxford friends is replaced with what Guillory calls “the pleasure of *distinction*, pleasure in the possession of cultural capital” (original italics 333). Thus, when Gerald is given an original Gauguin “snatched from the teeth of the head of Sony” (317) for a present, he neither recognizes its artist nor understands its bourgeois-critical theme, much less its beauty. “[I]n the spell of sheer physical possession” of Gauguin’s painting,

Gerald's first full response is exhibitionist: "Where on earth shall we put it?" (Ibid.). Nick decides to laugh "to cover Gerald's graceless tone" (Ibid.). That taste functions as a barometer of cultural status rather than as a source of pleasure in the dominant class is shown by the novel's attention to food and the manner in which it is consumed as well. At a dinner party, Gerald makes a fuss and warns his guests of the hot plates of venison, saying "the fat congeal[s] revoltingly if the plates [are] less than scorching hot" (121). Gerald goes on to explain in a condescending fashion: this "buck venison," hunted in his brother-in-law's deer park, "comes into season before the doe, and [is] very much superior" (Ibid.). In the next chapter, Nick visits Leo's house and experiences the "useful shock of class difference" (138). Along with a "doggedly literal" (141) replica painting of Lord Jesus, Nick is struck by Mrs. Charles' fried "special spicy chops and rice" and, more importantly, by the lack of style with which it is served. Whereas dinner at the Feddens is "sauntered towards through a sequence of other diversions, chats and decanting, gardening and tennis, gramophone records, whisky and gin," in Leo's house dinner comes straight after work at a quarter to five—three hours earlier than at Feddens'—without "room for diversions, no garden to speak of, and no alcohol" (138). The difference of attitude towards food in the two households aptly illustrates the analogy Bourdieu makes between cultural "taste" and literal palate for food. That is, "the antithesis between quantity and quality, substance and form" stressed in cultural capital is also found in the opposition between "the taste of necessity, which favours the most 'filling' and most economical foods, and the taste of liberty—or luxury—which shifts the emphasis to the manner (of presenting, serving, eating etc.)" (6).³

In addition to the high-class material of the novel, the “pleasures of the form” (Adams) offered by Hollinghurst’s brilliant writing may well invite the view that *The Line of Beauty* serves as a prime example of exclusive cultural capital, requiring the “aesthetic disposition” (Bourdieu 23) of the educated reader. In “The Market of Symbolic Goods,” Bourdieu argues that any cultural good is at once “a commodity” that has a commercial value and “a symbolic object” (16) that has a specific cultural value. Depending on the consideration of which value comes first, the field of cultural production—“the market of symbolic goods”—is divided into two. First, “the field of restricted production” (FRP) produces “pure,” “abstract,” and “esoteric” cultural goods, whose symbolic values are determined by a public of experts and largely academic decoders of cultural symbols. Second, “the field of large-scale cultural production” (FLP) follows the laws of the market, and the value of cultural products produced in the FLP is created by sales and the support of “the public at large” (17). To evaluate Hollinghurst’s novel within this frame, there is no doubt that this novel, often compared to the similarly artistic *Brideshead Revisited* by commentators, belongs to the FRP. Filled with “abstract” and “esoteric” discussions of Strauss’ “sheer bad taste” (87), a church designed by Ashton Webb (“a knobbly Gothic oddity in a street of stucco” (207)), and the distinction between the rococo and the baroque (“the rococo is the final deliquescence of the baroque” (267)), *The Line of Beauty* is written by an “Olympian intellectual” (Reynolds) who admits to not “know[ing] much about working-class life” (Wheeler 84). In an interview, Hollinghurst states that he regards form to be “more important than story” (Ibid.). Along with this remark, the compliments showered upon

the novel for its “lines of beauty” (Clark; Tonkin 2004) also demonstrate that the novel’s aesthetic value and symbolic status are constructed by the decoders of a subtle form, rather than by general readers who take immediate pleasures in content. Putting its vast promotional effect for both winning writers and publishers aside, the Man Booker Prize, as a public of producers of cultural symbols, is no less instrumental to adding to *The Line of Beauty*’s cultural capital.

It is worth noting how Hollinghurst’s novel can be interpreted as an aesthetic good, whose symbolic value is determined by literary critics in order to reinforce the canon-mainstream formation of literary market. Nevertheless, to glue this novel onto the field of high literary production is to lose sight of what is not “pure,” “abstract,” and “esoteric” in this novel: gay sex which is portrayed as beautifully, sincerely, and profusely as classic artworks are. Although *The Line of Beauty* includes graphic scenes of gay sex, accompanied by passages of romantic love, the veneration of black male bodies, thrilling threesomes, lines of narcotic beauty, and the possibility of contagion and death, commentators seem reluctant to make a stand about it and focus instead on celebrating Hollinghurst’s masterful prose. Tim Adams calls *The Line of Beauty* “a masterpiece” written by a “great English stylist in full maturity,” and Andrew Holleran remarks that “[n]o one writes novels better than Hollinghurst.” Peter Bradshaw opines that all the reservations one may have about the novel are “offset by the pure pleasure and exhilaration of Hollinghurst’s writing, always so stylish and poised, with generous cadences of sorrow and delight.” Always secondary to the novel’s glorious high style, “low” sex, despite its permeation of the novel, is commented on with amusing yet

passing remarks: “No serious writer has lavished more attention on the shape, tilt, and variety of the human penis” (Reese); “Men are described and redescribed as eagerly as Melville’s whales” (Wood 2004); the materials of this novel are “lazy politicians, snobbery, AIDS, gay sex and lots of it, sexual banter and penis measurements” (anonymous). If *The Swimming Pool Library* (1988), Hollinghurst’s first novel about a young and sexy aristocrat and his black working-class lovers, is assessed to be the “first major ‘crossover’ novel from gay fiction to the mainstream” (Wheeler 71), the reviewers of *The Line of Beauty* seem to be accustomed to Hollinghurst’s comingling of high culture and raw/low lust and have lost interest in such provocative mingling. Whereas the media capitalize on the novel’s explicit treatment of gay sex with brassy headlines such as “Gay Book Wins Booker” (*The Sun*) and “Booker Won by Gay Sex” (*Daily Express*), reviewers are “bored” by it: “those readers who admire Hollinghurst’s style but are weary of his sex drive will be pleased to discover it [*The Line of Beauty*] is a work of social nuance rather than sexual urgency” (Hickling). For Hollinghurst, who observes that “the way to write about sex is to treat it as seriously and describe it as beautifully and accurately as you describe everything else” (qtd. in Wheeler 76), reviewers’ boredom with gay sex is “just the new way of saying disgusting” (Bearn).

This chapter argues the need to scrutinize the ways in which the divided themes of this novel interact with one another, not so as to perpetuate the binary between high and low, pure and contaminated, and cultured and raw, but to show the synergetic beauty which springs from the fusion of heterogeneous aesthetic experiences and which invalidates forms of moral judgment presupposed in the division. To return to the

reviewers' loss of interest in gay sex in *The Line of Beauty*, I speculate that it results from their disappointment with the main characters of the novel. Not to mention Gerald and his hypocritical party, "a snobbish and loathsome cast" (Hensher), the characterization of Nick and his two sequential lovers, Leo and Wani, is accused of being underdeveloped and stereotyped. Leo, albeit likable, presents an "obvious, rather stereotyped allure of black men and working-class hunks" (Hitchings). Wani, called by Catherine Fedden "a closeted Lebanese poofter with a psychopath for a father" (303), is "essentially charmless" (Bradshaw). If *The Swimming Pool Library* speaks to "the old idea that gay men are linked across barriers of class and race by sexuality and puts it up against a system in which the forces of class are still extremely powerful" (Wheeler 82), the issues of race and class in *The Line of Beauty* remain less evident and resist a schematic postcolonial reading. In other words, if Will Beckwith is penetrated by a Sudanese-English cook and "the empire fucks back" (Sinfield 2000; 97) in *The Swimming Pool Library*, Wani's character is the "rawest embodiment of Thatcherism...brutally rich, peerlessly selfish, with a rapacious, insatiable appetite – for cocaine, sex, pornography, power, money" (Jones); Wani functions more as an exploiter than as a victim of colonialism. Hollinghurst's aestheticization of Leo and Wani's bodies also facilitates the criticism that the novel commodifies and thingifies the male body in the name of beauty.

Nick had a moment of selfless but intensely curious immersion in his [Wani's] beauty. The forceful chin with its slight saving roundness, the deep-set eyes with their confounding softness, the cheekbones and the long nose, the little ears and springy curls, the cruel charming curve of his lips, made everything else in the house seem stale, over-artful, or beside the point. (81)

Nick's indulgence in Wani's beauty, as if Nick dissects an artwork in appreciation, runs the risk of turning Wani into a passive object of his gaze. Moreover, the mildly pornographic description of his genitalia, "the [provocative] way his penis always show[s], a little jutting bulge to the left, modest, unconscious, but unignorable, and a trigger to greedy thoughts in Nick" (66), risks a commodification of beauty, a "promiscuous" yoking together of the sublime (in that Wani's beauty surpasses everything else in the room) and the perversely pretty (a "cruel charming curve"). As Eagleton notes, the commodity, "like much of postmodern culture...integrates high and low" and is hence "transgressive, promiscuous and polymorphous" (19990; 374).

I would argue, however, that Nick's fascination with Wani's beauty means less a thingification of the body than a "fleshing out" of the site of beauty by inviting the beautiful *and* dark-skinned, homosexual, and dying body to aesthetic consideration. This "fleshing out" of aesthetics is best illuminated in the multifarious meaning of "the line of beauty," the novel's title. In a characteristic scene where Nick's donnish meditation on art coexists with the "uneasy post-coital vacancy" after intoxicated sex with Wani under intoxication, Nick explains that William Hogarth has chosen harps and branches as examples of the ogee curve—"the line of beauty"—in the mid-eighteenth century, "bones rather than flesh" (176).⁴ As Nick runs his hand down the "dip and swell" of Wani's naked back, Nick claims that it is "time for a new *Analysis of Beauty*" inspired by a natural ogee curve drawn on the body, "the best example of" the line of beauty (Ibid.). In a later scene, Nick spots Leo stricken with AIDS at a pub and recollects the "double curve of his lower back and muscular bottom" (368), another line

of beauty that still haunts Nick with a memory of the “beautiful rawness of those days” (362) with Leo. As “the snakelike flicker of an instinct, of two compulsions held in one unfolding movement” (176), the ogee curve’s duality is uncovered in one harmonious moment as in the “love-chord” of Strauss, which is “high and low at once, an abysmal pizzicato, a pounce of the darkest brass, and above it a hair-raising sheen of strings” (122). “[F]rightening” and “also indescribably happy” (121), the love-chord, title of the first section of the novel, makes Nick shiver in its association with his delicate and fierce desire for Leo and stands for an aural line of beauty. Both lines of beauty—the ogee curve and the love-chord—as reimagined and fleshed out by Nick create room for a new ethical aesthetic in which the “lower, coarse, vulgar, venal, servile—in a word, natural—enjoyment” is coterminous with “the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasures forever closed to the profane” (Bourdieu 7). Wani’s “line of beauty” (224), a line of cocaine, enlarges the perimeter of pleasure as well, although the fact that it is “all done with money” (189), bought with cash, chopped with a credit card, and snorted in a rolled bill, remains problematic.

While my contention is that the lines of beauty traced on Leo’s and Wani’s bodies open up onto a new aesthetic, embracing both decorous and profane beauty, what *The Line of Beauty* illustrates equally well—and what has been seen as the novel’s major achievement—is the extent to which the synthesis of high and low is used to justify the production of “transgressive, promiscuous and polymorphous” commodities in the name of postmodern aesthetics. Examples of such commodities abound in this novel. Hawkswood, where Rachel Fedden’s bachelor brother Lord Lionel Kessler lives, is “a

seventeenth-century château re-imagined in terms of luxurious modernity” (44) and showcases “the strange and seductive fusion of an art museum and a luxury hotel” (45). Another example, Wani’s 1830s flat, imitates “a swanky hotel”: “It was what you did if you had millions but no particular taste: you made your private space like a swanky hotel; just as such hotels flattered their customers by being vulgar simulacra of lavish private homes” (357). In noting the similarity between postmodernism and Aestheticism, Andrew Eastham argues that Hollinghurst’s novel “bears witness to the ways that the post-modern moment performed a translation of Aestheticism; how [Aestheticism] return[s] farcically as stylized pastiche and over-consumption” in the postmodern era (517). From this perspective, Wani’s “pastiche” beauty, “both English and exotic, like so many things [Nick] loved” (176), and Wani’s “over-consumption” of money, sex, and drugs befitting his overly beautiful looks, might be understood to incarnate a “vulgar” aesthetic of postmodern *mélange*. Then, the reader is obliged to wonder: what lies in the heart of Wani’s beauty? Recreating the line of beauty but wasted by lust and death, is his beauty high or low, pure or mixed? Does his beauty render him redeemable or vile? What would be the value of such compelling yet evanescent and even pointless beauty? Are we to be unfailingly betrayed by his beauty?

Indifferent to the moral judgment of beauty, Hollinghurst’s novel does not seem to answer any of the above questions. Devoid of guilt, regret, and hatred but brimming with adoration, joy, and acquiescence, the narrator of *The Line of Beauty*, while he “see[s] right through” (120) the people around him like the Master, is too selfless to condemn anyone. A strikingly frank narrator, Nick remarks: “Of course [Wani’s] house

was vulgar, as almost everything postmodern was, but he found himself taking a surprising pleasure in it” (175). As the owner of the house is dying with AIDS, Nick finds the house “tawdry and pretentious” and is “puzzled to think he had spent so much time in it so happily and conceitedly” (357). Nick’s self-criticism, however, does not negate the joy he had in it or make him penitent. One can set up an analogy between “Nick’s roles of aesthetic consultant and companion and his roles of cokehead and pimp,” and “the Thatcherite elite’s posing...as connoisseurs and patrons of the arts and their embrace of naked and unbridled greed” (Moon 637-38) in order to disapprove Nick and Wani’s pleasure-sated relationship as no less repulsive than the relationship between “Thatcher and her ‘horny,’ ‘hot-for-super-wealth’ cabinet” (638). Or, better yet, one can shift one’s focus from the “social satire” or the “comedy of manners” reading of the novel and pay attention to the ethical alchemy of beauty Nick undergoes. Although the cultural capital of beauty—its entanglement with class distinction and postmodern culture—as embedded in Hollinghurst’s novel is noteworthy, this chapter argues for a new post-moral reading of Nick by focusing on his guest status and conceiving an ethical subject out of a “Guest.” In other words, *The Line of Beauty* delineates an ethical step whereby Nick’s “unconditional love” (91) of Leo and “selfless” (81) immersion in Wani’s beauty lead to “a love of the world that [is] shockingly unconditional” (438). This is the distributing power of love and beauty, an “ethical fairness” inspired by an “aesthetical fairness.”

“Nothing Is More Urgent...Than a *Destruction* of Aesthetics”

Giorgio Agamben, *The Man without Content*

This section will argue that Hollinghurst’s novel creates Nick’s *Bildungsroman*—a “queer” adaptation of the genre in that Nick’s “neglected years of moral education” (100) are too soon followed by the shadow of death. In order to better understand the ways that Nick’s search for love, sex, and beauty ignites “an ethical fairness,” it appears fundamental to brush upon recent considerations of the intersection of ethics and aesthetics.⁵ In contrast of Guillory’s words that open the first section of this chapter, “‘aesthetic value’ is no more or other than cultural capital,” Agamben’s sentence represents a new effort to renounce a narrow notion of aesthetics as “the science of the work of art” (6) and revive the ethical dimension intimated in classical and modern aesthetics. For Agamben, the goal of art is not to “produce beautiful works nor to respond to a disinterested aesthetic ideal, but to change man’s life” (7). Agamben’s extended realm of art in which art is not constrained to artworks but pertains to life is echoed in Foucault’s following words, which are as Nietzschean as Agamben’s:

In our society, art has become something that is related only to objects and not to individuals or to life. That art is something which is specialized or done by experts who are artists. But couldn’t everyone’s life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object but not our life? (261)

Reverberating Nietzsche’s sentence, “one should create one’s life by giving style to it through long practice and daily work,” Foucault argues that “the self is not given to us” and that “we have to create ourselves as a work of art” (262). Foucault’s conceptualization of “life as art,” which requires “the care of the self” or “the technique

of the self” (254), merges ethical and aesthetical practice insofar as aestheticism is defined by Foucault as “transforming yourself” (130) and ethics as “the relationship you have to yourself when you act” (131). Foucault discovers the best groundwork for “the care of the self” in the Greek ethics of pleasure.

Wittgenstein’s bold declaration, “ethics and aesthetics are one and the same,” is not to be missed by those who wish to restore the classic tripod where ethics, aesthetics, and politics ask the same question in three different ways and are “one and the same.” In an article borrowing its title from Wittgenstein’s words, Eaglestone argues that we need to stop understanding artwork “as an object of productive knowledge...that relies on one understanding of truth” (2004; 606). Eaglestone, by way of Heidegger, elucidates that before ethics and aesthetics were divided by different modes of inquiry presuming different notions of truth, an artwork was believed to be “world revealing,” rather than to produce certain knowledge, and was deemed ethical by nature. Hence, “ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.” Another good example of the “tripod” thinking, Eagleton’s *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* concludes with a suggestion of “love” after a thorough analysis of art’s ideological role in modern bourgeois society. Defining love as “the fullest instance of free, reciprocal self-fulfillment” (413), Eagleton argues that love will serve as a way to reconnect the modern breach between the sphere of personal ethics and political affair. Recollecting Aristotle’s point that “ethics is a branch of politics, of the questions of what it is to live well...at the level of a whole society” (Ibid.), Eagleton’s “materialist ethics” holds that we should attain love in order to “enact

the best possibilities of our nature” (Ibid.). Such an ethic is “aesthetic” to the extent that it originates from each individual’s need for “pleasure, fulfillment, creativity” (Ibid.)

In broadening the range of aesthetics in dramatic measure, these attempts to reunite aesthetics and ethics are opposed to Bourdieu and Guillory’s sociological and anthropological understanding of aesthetics as conducive to (nothing but) class formation and cultural capitalization. Yet, what remains unanswered for me is how one would be able to distinguish “the care of the self” from the stylization of the self in postmodern society where commodification encroaches upon life as “lifestyle.” Whereas the limited notion of aesthetics as no more or other than cultural capital or the science of artwork must be “destroyed,” it does not follow that aesthetic judgment should be boundlessly extended and applied to daily consumption in the name of lifestyle. Tellingly, for Guillory, “aesthetic pleasure” is an oxymoron. Called by Kant “negative pleasure” (129), reflective and deferred pleasure specific to high art is “curiously a kind of unpleasure” (333) and manifests distaste for immediate pleasure gained from low cultural productions. The immediate pleasure of a working-class aesthetic, on the other hand, is produced by “the agreeable contents of the work,” rather than by contemplative form, and “fails to be aesthetic at all” (Ibid.). Thus, “aesthetic pleasure” is oxymoronic and is experienced by neither of the classes. For instance, Leo’s mother is enamored of what she only knows as “a very famous old picture” of Lord Jesus in her house. Nick, knowing that it is Holman Hunt’s and having seen its original, finds it distasteful: “It was just the sort of painting, doggedly literal and morbidly symbolic, that Nick liked the least, and it was even worse life-size, when the

literalism so cried out to be admired” (141). Instead, Nick adores the “hints and approximations” (138) of upper-class society and the “upper-class economy of [Rachel’s] talk” (44). But the pleasure sensed from this esoteric communication, or the lack thereof, is tantalizing, frustrating, and unpleasurable. In any case, beauty is austere and the aesthetic judgment is not to be enjoyed. As I discuss in my second chapter, however, “the commodity is now ‘aesthetically’ consumed” (Jameson 53). Freed from the “habitus” (qtd. in Guillory 332) of the dominant class members, aesthetics is enlarged and renamed as lifestyle, and the word “aesthetics” now covers fields as opposite as ethics and cosmetics. From the imported coffee brand Nick selects (“Kenyan Rich, medium roast...from Myers’ in Kensington Church Street. They import their own. One pays more, but I think it’s worth it” (353)) to the “special self-irony of the lavatory gallery” (355) Nick learns from his Oxford friends, discriminatory aesthetic judgment intrudes on everyday life—coffee and toilet—disguised in a “fun” and “trendy” lifestyle.

The Foucauldian ethic of pleasure that would synthesize ethics and aesthetics through “the care of the self,” although Foucault underscores the need of asceticism in practicing such care, can be misappropriated as an aestheticization of the self adorned in a commodified lifestyle. Wani’s fabulous lifestyle that goes with his exotic looks and identity as a “foreigner” exemplifies a postmodern aesth/ethic of pleasure; he lives in a flat full of “eclectic features, lime-wood pediments, coloured glass, surprising apertures; the Gothic bedroom [with] an Egyptian bathroom” (175). Notwithstanding, I will argue that *The Line of Beauty* makes room for a new link between ethics and aesthetics based

in this world of superficial beauty by attending to an oddly passive and uncritical narrator, Nick Guest. Nick's "guest" status manifests itself in many ways throughout the novel: he is literally a lodger/guest of the Fedden house, a middle-class gay man who is occasionally invited (usually in order to make the right number) to join the "looking glass world" (55) of upper-class heterosexuals, and an aesthete who never owns beautiful things but becomes a courteous guest to those who can afford them. But Nick, regardless of his guest-ness, or precisely because of it, nonetheless falls in love with every beautiful thing he sees in the novel and gains "delight in [his] own lateralness" (Scarry 114). Nick's "opiated adjacency" (Ibid.), Scarry's alternative term for the delightful lateralness created within the observer upon encountering beauty, changes our focus from aesthetic objects to their effects on the beholder.

In *On Beauty and Being Just*, Scarry, like Nick in a way, is not interested in clarifying some intrinsic quality of beauty. Instead, she highlights "the very pliancy or elasticity of beauty" (46). Insofar as "seemingly self-evident beauty" fills our minds yet at the same time invites us to "search for something beyond itself, something larger or something of the same scale with which it needs to be brought into relation" (29), Scarry argues that beauty evokes experiences of error as well as of conviction. Scarry's illumination of beauty's "liability to error, contestation, and plurality" (52) is critical to a new mode of ethical and pedagogical aesthetics open to "other" significations of beauty engendered by each beholder. To rephrase, aestheticism has less to do with the oppressive notion of beauty, whose unquestionable and unalterable grandeur demands our veneration, than with the educational nature of beauty which summons us up to be

shaken by it, speculate on it, and pursue more of it, thereby confirming our “aspiration for enduring certitude...without fulfilling [it]” (53). Scarry’s viewer-oriented aesthetic should be differentiated from the conventional branch of aesthetics assuming the aggressive and possessive gaze of the perceiver. To the contrary, Scarry maintains that beauty requires us “to give up our imaginary position as the center” (111). “A radical decentering” (Ibid.) of the self that occurs at the moment we see something beautiful guarantees “the nonself-interestedness of the beholder” (117). Neither a “disinterested” pleasure, which reprehends the intimate and private joy of the viewer, nor a “self-interested” pleasure, which is likely to result in an appropriation of beautiful objects for one’s selfish satisfaction, the nonself-interestedness of the beholder suggests a new ethical manner of relishing beauty without dominating or being dominated by it.⁶

Beauty’s encouragement of error and contestation as well as its invitation of the beholder to be adjacent to it are superlatively illustrated by Nick’s composite aesthetic experiences, which afford Nick “the continuing shock of what [is] beautiful, strange, and even ugly” (27)—the words he uses to describe his first rendezvous with Leo. On the one hand, the idyllic fantasies about gay men Nick indulges before he meets and is deflowered by Leo, such as his “taste for the aesthetically radiant images of gay activity, gathering in a golden future for him, like swimmers on a sunlit bank” (23), would exemplify an amusing contemplation of beauty. On the other, Nick’s happiness coming from the new red Mazda Wani buys him demonstrates a more complicated case of snobbish pleasure: “The car was his lower nature, wrapped in a gift ribbon, and he came to a quick accommodation with it, and found it not so bad or so low after all” (234).

Lastly but not least, the “beautiful brothels” (260) and the “thoughtless luxury of top-class hotels” (267) that Nick and Wani research during their European tour for the first issue of *Ogee* (the luxury magazine edited by Nick and produced by Wani) sound paradoxical in harnessing together “brothels” and “beautiful,” thereby raising a question on the “slyness” (190) of beauty, that is, the beauty of something morally ugly. Without generating any finality, however, Nick’s experience of heterogeneous beauties offers a contestatory—and sumptuous—site where the bedazzled beholder strives to figure them out and spread their inspiration.

Due to Hollinghurst’s (in)famous conjoining of high and low and good and wicked under the paramount rubric of beauty, in other words, his capability to describe anything as beautifully as anything can be, *The Line of Beauty* has been at best called a “morally neutral fiction” (Moss) or at worst accused of being complicitous with what the author criticizes. Comparing Hollinghurst’s writing to James’ phrase, “bad manners organized,” Henry Hitchings notes that Hollinghurst “celebrates the very things he condemns.” On a similar note, Holleran considers the novel to be not only an expose of the “subtle snobbery of aesthetics” but “also an example of it.” Although Hollinghurst’s novel is charged for the same offense as Rushdie’s *Fury*—that the author appears to take too much pleasure in the gaudy society that he purports to denigrate—his “guest” narrator, unlike the protagonist of *Fury*, remains too naïve and polite to pass any judgment. Ironically, for a knowing aesthete, “[r]eally [Nick] didn’t know what was allowed, what was funny and what was inept” (91) most of the time. In the interview with Stephen Moss, Hollinghurst underscores the importance of irony, stating that “I

prefer to let things reverberate with their own ironies and implications.” As *The Line of Beauty* presents the reader a world of stunning yet contestable beauty contingent upon the loving effort of the beholder, Nick’s guest status comes to stand for an “opiated adjacency,” a superb trope of irony prevailing in the novel. This reinterpretation of Nick’s character from the self-annihilating and dispensable guest to the “nonself-interested” master of the ethical alchemy of beauty is illuminated through the novel’s innumerable references to “the Master.”

The instances of the Master’s influence on *The Line of Beauty* are too many to be neatly excavated and classified. The influences are found at the level of prose (Hollinghurst’s sinuous sentences), of structure (“the moral demands of melodrama” (Eastham 523) and the “shocking tripartite structure” (Flannery 297)), and of characterization (Nick’s “reluctance that was Jamesian in itself to say exactly what its [Nick’s thesis’s] subject was” (186), and his postgraduate thesis on Jamesian style that “hides things and reveals things at the same time” (50)). At the level of intertextuality, Nick recollects a scene in *The Portrait of a Lady* when he sees Lionel and Rachel sitting in the same room and suddenly realizes that they are more intimate than they look. Another example of intertextuality, Nick and Wani try in vain to produce a film adaptation of *The Spoils of Poynton*, a James novel which Nick describes as being “about someone who loved things more than people. And who ends up with nothing” (379). Tellingly, “someone who loved things more than people” is exactly what some reviewers of Hollinghurst’s novel say in their complaints about Nick and the novel: *The Line of Beauty* observes “with the same eye it turns on the furniture” (Holleran); and

Nick “valued beauty too much and human relationships too little” (Salinsky).⁷ In addition, Nick habitually quotes his hero’s perspicacious words: “*The extremity of personal absence had just overtaken him*” (original italics 358); “it is art that *makes* life, makes interest, makes importance, for our consideration and application of these things, and I know of no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of its process” (original italics 123). The ever-so-inappropriate Wani selects *Henry James and the Question of Romance* with “a sleek Mylar sleeve” (222) in order to prepare his hypnotic “line of beauty”: cocaine. A handful of articles written by James scholars explore the many similarities discovered in James’ torn attitude towards the glitz of contemporary aestheticism and Nick’s fascination with and disenchantment by the mercantile art culture of the eighties, both of which are contextualized in relation to hidden sexuality. Among these critics, Daniel Hannah’s analysis of the “guest” status of gay culture is worthy of mention. Hannah argues that in *The Line of Beauty*, “the gay observer is retained as the perfect guest, the refined observer, in the heteronormative house of capitalist acquisition so long as evidence of his sexuality is reduced to pure aesthetic taste” (85). This figure of the subtle gay observer and his “style of questionable detachment” finds its predecessor in James, “an intensely private, ambiguously sexual figure profoundly interested in the aesthetic capital to be reaped from the breakdown of private and public” (91).

While the articles tracing the Master’s steps in Hollinghurst’s novel are certainly helpful, most of them are intent more on identifying Jamesian elements in the novel than on thinking about the innovative ways *The Line of Beauty* uses James. Instead of

gauzing the accuracy with which *The Line of Beauty* represents the work and the figure of James, I hope to show how Nick's witty use of Jamesian irony, "prostituting the Master" (182) in Nick's words, complicates the guest-Master relationship. Nick's (and Hollinghurst's) love of irony prevails in the novel, but it is most evident in his profuse use of the words "beauty" and "beautiful"—predictably the most reiterated words in the novel—that never mean simply pretty or pleasing. For example, "the feel of [Leo's] warm hard body under the silky shirt" is "worryingly beautiful" (34). Tobias Fedden's nickname, "the Sleeping Beauty," is "the praise in the mockery" (57), because for all his looks and niceness, Toby is an incorrigible heterosexual snob who "tried now and then not to think like a rich person, but could never really get the hang of it" (123). Nick finds his clandestine affair with Wani "silly," but still, "moronic with lust," Nick sees "a beauty in the slyness of it" (190). Nick's threesome with Wani and a skinhead rent boy invokes "mischievous beauty" (219). And the delivery boy of the first issue of *Ogee* utters "fucking beautiful," looking at its cover with "clear glossy black, with the white Borromini cherub...its long wings stretching in a double curve on to the spine, where its tip touched the wing tip of another cherub...the two wings forming together an exquisitely graceful ogee" (427). Even the last sentence of the novel, invoking "a street corner that seemed...so beautiful" (438), is no mere expression of calming beauty as it is preceded by Nick's poignant thoughts on his own mortality. Teeming with paradoxes and ironies, these instances of beauty open the reader's eyes to beauty's tendency for "error, contestation, and plurality," that is, beauty's power to perplex the beholder. Nick owes this confusion and disturbance caused by the superfluous use of the word

“beautiful” to James. Simon, gay staff member of *Ogee*, says in response to Nick’s lesson on the Master:

“It sounds like Henry James called everyone beautiful and marvelous”...
 “Oh, beautiful, magnificent...*wonderful*. I suppose it’s really more what the characters call each other, especially when they’re being wicked. In the later books, you know, they do it more and more, when actually they’re more and more ugly—in a moral sense.”
 “Right...” said Simon.
 “The worse they are the more they see beauty in each other.”
 “Interesting,” said Howard drily.
 Nick cast a fond glance at his little audience. “There’s a marvellous bit in his play *The High Bid*, when a man says to the butler in a country house, ‘I mean, to whom do you beautifully *belong*?’”
 Simon grunted, and looked round to see if Melanie could hear. He said, “So what was his knob like, then?...You know, Ricky?” (original italics 183)

This scene is remarkable for Hollinghurst’s (and Nick’s) characteristic combination of the carnal and the intellectual, of Ricky’s “solid eight inches” and “Henry’s” proper literary characters including a butler in a country house: “So Nick prattled on, mixing up sex and scholarship” (Ibid.). On the surface, Nick’s “prostituting the Master” to his “little audience” consisting of Simon and Howard, who are much more interested in Nick’s one-night stand with Ricky than in the psychology of Jamesian characters, may be seen as a betrayal of the Master, Nick’s failure, if a hilarious one, to convince his co-workers of James’ masterful use of irony in *The High Bid*. For me, however, Nick’s teasing and flirtatious “affair with his writer” (182) does not devalue the Master but causes the reader to rethink the guest-Master division in a positive and fruitful way. To paraphrase, both James and Nick call everyone beautiful, fully aware of the ironical and erroneous nature of beauty. The difference between them is that the Master remains a guest to his own world of aestheticism by believing that artworks and aesthetes, like

butlers, cannot but “beautifully *belong*” to the highest bidder.⁸ To the contrary, Nick Guest becomes the master of his world of beauty by taking “delight in [his] lateralness.” Nick’s “lateralness” and “opiated adjacency,” far from constituting a loss of agency or a helpless slavery, opens up a possibility of enjoying beauty without owning it and becoming its master, as in Nick’s “possessing the place by knowing it better than his hosts” (271). In this sense, the guest position felicitously embodies an ethical deconstruction of the masculine subjectivity presumed in mastery and, at the same time, ironically retains the role of the master in the alchemy of beauty, in which the master, a loving beholder, is open to the contestation and correction built up in beauty.

In *Of Hospitality*, Derrida pushes further this inversion of status between the guest-stranger and the host-master and argues that “it is *as if* the stranger or foreigner held the keys” (original italics 123) of the house. If there exist two terms of the law within the laws of hospitality, “*The* law of unlimited hospitality (to give the new arrival all of one’s home and oneself...without asking a name, or compensation, or the fulfillment of even the smallest condition)” on the one hand, and “the laws (in the plural), those rights and duties that are always conditioned and conditional” (original italics 77) on the other, the tension between the two terms is non-dialecticizable and inseparable—although they require each other for the laws of hospitality to function. This is why Derrida uses “*as if*” in order to designate the ethical working of the laws of hospitality, the transformation of “everyone into everyone else’s hostage” (125), as yet to be realized. It is therefore “*as if*” the guest, by being unconditionally welcomed to the house and taking place in the house, could “save the master and liberate the power of his

house; it's *as if* the master, *qua* master, were prisoner of his place and his power, of his ipseity, of his subjectivity" (123). Then, it is the master, "the inviting host," who becomes the hostage and "who really always has been" (Ibid.). And the guest, "the invited hostage," turns out to be "the one who invites the one who invites, the master of the host...the host of the hosts" (125). In turning "everyone into everyone else's hostage," Derrida argues, the laws of hospitality testify to Lévinas' foremost claim: "The subject is hostage" (109).

At the end of *The Line of Beauty*, Gerald, the host of Nick Guest, is investigated for his involvement in illegal asset stripping and is caught in his extramarital affair with his secretary at his friend's "fuck-flat," all of which lead to his resignation from the ministry. Nick, who naïvely yet earnestly has believed himself to be the Feddens' "lost middle child" (4), is thrown out of the house a few days later when the "treacherous hack" (413) of the press exposes his relationship with Wani and Wani's dying of AIDS. Considering that Gerald takes a new directorship and "can't lose" (435) even after his fall from grace and that Nick is cruelly driven away for a lesser charge than Gerald's—only love, no adultery or embezzlement—the power dynamic between the host and the guest in this case seems irrelevant to Derrida's point at first. Accusing Nick of "an old homo trick" (420), Gerald remains an inhospitable and homophobic host. While Nick's expulsion from the Feddens' may be interpreted to confirm the permanent guest status of the gay aesthete at the powerful heterosexuals' disposal, this reading assumes the Fedden house as the center to which everyone aspires to be invited. Rather, I contend that Nick's leaving of the center-house is critical to deconstructing the laws of hospitality

founded upon “a conjugal model, paternal and phallogocentric” (Derrida 2000; 149). By vacating the locus of “the familial despot, the father, . . . the master of the house who lays down the laws of hospitality” (Ibid.), Nick is able to stand alone on an empty corner street at the end and still see the beauty of the world, welcomed to it and humbly subjected to it: a new law of hospitality. Meanwhile, Gerald is never freed from his enslavement to “sex, money, power” (412), and continues to perform the “heterosexual queenery” (333), complete with his “Elegant Wife,” “his Blushing Blonde Secretary” (404), and “the Other Woman” (the PM) (321).

The new law of hospitality that I argue is envisioned in *The Line of Beauty* adapts Derrida’s laws of hospitality in a “queer” manner by removing the paternal and phallogocentric host and by replacing the father with the boy-guests, who are happily deprived of their subjectivities and greeted by the beautiful world as its hostages.⁹ Hollinghurst’s portrayal of Nick’s romances with two boys, Leo and Wani, offers a prime example of this ethical concept of “desubjectivation.” Primarily developed by Lacan, desubjectivation is best embodied in the Lacanian notion of the “impossible Love” (xi). Frances Restuccia explicates that for Lacan, Love is impossible because Love, unlike desire which is “never *for* what appears to be its aims,” insists on “what it aims for” (original italics xiv), which can never happen. Interestingly, this is precisely what renders the impossible Love, a “self-shattering Love” (xi), the best site for desubjectivation to occur. To rephrase the impossible Love using Tim Dean and Christopher Lane’s reading of Lacan: “in sex we couple not so much with our fantasy of the other as with our fantasy of the Other” (26). Thus, there exists nothing like Love to

which human subjects might be restored as in the idea of “harmonious heterosexuality” (Ibid.). The very impossibility of harmonious sex or Love, however, allows for a desubjectivated and ethical communication with the Other, what Dean and Lane characterize as “a nonindividualized zone of alterity” (Ibid.). Nick’s romantic relationships with Leo and Wani, unsatisfactory and even frustrating owing to the absence of fidelity, duration, and “happy ending,” can illuminate many insights when viewed in this light. That is to say, the significance of Nick’s impossible Love for the dying lovers does not depend on the harmonization between Nick and his tremendously different lovers, or on the canonization of their intimacies in the form of long-term and committed relationship. Rather, Love for Nick constitutes an ethical-aesthetical experience through which to learn how to “lose” his self in its impossible—erroneous, lethal, yet irresistible—beauty.

The main theme of the first part of the novel, “The Love-Chord,” Nick’s relationship with Leo is painted as highly romantic and sentimental, if not without moments of disturbance. Expecting Leo to be “a handsome black man in his late twenties with a racing bike and a job in local government” (25), Nick describes the day of his blind date with him as “the hot August day [filled with] a shimmer of nerves, with little breezy interludes of lustful dreaming” (3). Once Nick finds Leo’s Miss Selfridge T-shirt “funny and touching and sexy” (32) and kisses him with “a sigh of surrender” (29), the “rush of risk flowed beautifully into the mood of adventure” (35). The sensual picturing of their first sex is lusciously accompanied by the depiction of the childish joy Nick savors, and his kiss on Leo’s sphincter feels “hilarious in the shivers of pleasure”

(36). While many commentators consider Leo to be the “most engaging and sympathetic” (Ridgeway) of the largely snobbish and rich characters of the novel, what strikes me more than his personableness is his occasional betrayal of class- and race-related vulnerability. Leo, having “a certain caustic preoccupation with money” (30), tells Nick that he has expected him to be a rich boy. In Leo’s “each little brag,” Nick discerns “the outward denial of an inner doubt” (31). Leo’s “hard self-confidence” contrasted against Nick’s “modesty and natural fastidiousness” (30) is poignantly damaged when he visits the empty house of the Feddens: “[Leo’s] look was a wince of lust and also...of self-accusation—that he had been so slow, so vain, so blind” (155). As opposed to Leo’s self-deprecating moment, Nick receives the eye-opening experience of visiting Leo’s house quite differently—condescendingly and graciously: “He had never been in a black household before. He saw that first love had come with a bundle of other firsts, which he took hold of like a wonderful but worrying bouquet” (139).

Nick’s “silent, superior way” (30) of treating Leo in the beginning of their relationship, however, gradually switches to Nick’s realization of Leo’s Otherness, whose alterity can be “so beautifully alien” (35) but also can be “frightening,” as if Leo were “a mugger as much as a lover” (149). After they watch *Scarface* together, Nick is dismayed by “an artistic disagreement” (148) between them, and Leo stops Nick on the street, telling him to stop worrying and trust “Uncle Leo”: Nick “glanced a little worriedly none the less to left and right, since Leo was holding him against the wall like a mugger as much as a lover—he worried what people would think” (149). Although this scene might be used to support Lawrence Driscoll’s unconvincing criticism, “the

black working-class male clearly constitutes a zone of narrative anxiety as they are always conveniently killed off or rapidly removed [sic]" (140), it is imperative *not* to see Leo's otherness only in terms of class and race. Nick states ashamedly that he "made the mistake of thinking that Leo didn't feel things strongly, and then the shock, when his love and need for him leapt out, angry at being doubted, took his breath away, and almost frightened him" (145). I argue that this emotional "mugging" lies at the heart of the Other's incomprehensible and often aggressive alterity beyond the difference of class and race. In "Is the Rectum a Grave?" Bersani famously argues that gay men's obsession with anal sex translates to the death of "the masculine idea of proud subjectivity" (221). Similarly, through his sexual relationship, Nick is robbed of his "silently superior" self—which I propose to call an "ontological mugging" of the Other—in order to become lost in the new world ushered in by the Other. In this sense, the fulfillment of Nick and Leo's "homeless love" (104) consists not so much in grappling with each other's differences and building a "home" housing subjectivity as in Nick's losing himself in the disseminating power of Leo's alien beauty, which "bounce[s] Nick into life."

Leo never knew how much Nick had imagined him, before he'd met him; or how the first kiss, the first feel of his body, had staggered a boy who till then had lived all in his mind. Leo wasn't imaginative: that was part of the point and the beauty of him. But he had a kind of genius, as far as Nick was concerned. That big red tick on his letter had bounced him into life. (367)

If going out with Leo is viewed by Nick's friends as "the double triumph of boyfriend and black" (101), having a secret affair with Wani is tainted with cocaine, pornography, and guilty pleasure, posing the reader a special challenge in reading Wani

in the light of ethics and aesthetics. Another challenge would be that whereas Nick and Leo's "homeless love" is appealing for its naivety and sincerity, Nick and Wani's "sumptuously filthy" (Hitchings) love life is unsustainable without rent boys and drug money and appears superficial; hence the elegantly contemptuous title of the second part of the novel, "To Whom Do You Beautifully Belong?" This opposition is also evinced by the repeated descriptions of Leo's smells, "little shocks of authenticity" (154), versus Wani's falseness; in Catherine's words, Wani is merely "a shop dummy going *charming*" (298) and "a parody of a good-looking person" (303). Above all, for "a Chocoholic" (Hannah 87) like Nick for whom "all white boys look the same" (223), Wani's body is only "pale brown" (161). Catherine again teases Nick that Wani has even "been to university" (303). Just as Leo's character does not simply represent the attraction of a nice working-class black guy, however, Wani's character is intriguing for his betrayal of delicate feelings, his "glamorous enigma" tied in with his "bewildering good looks" (165). For example, after sex, Wani "turn[s] his head aside in thoughtful grievance" (176); he sometimes "allow[s] Nick a tiny smile" (188); and his look is "so fathomlessly interesting" for its "command and surrender on another deeper level" (190). Wani's imponderable aloofness can be pondered in the context of his tragic family history. Bertrand Ouradi, Wani's enormously snobbish father, has lost his first son in the Lebanese civil war. While this "family mystery" renders Wani "instantly more touching, more glamorous and more forgivable" (246) for Nick, for others Wani is no less foreign and despicable than Leo—more so than Leo for Wani's threat to white, less rich Englishmen. An Oxford friend viciously *and* covetously dubs Wani as "a cute

little Lebanese boy who'd been sent to Harrow and turned into a drawling English gentleman" (165).

To understand the richness of Wani's character and "redeem" him as no better or worse than Leo, if important, is not the goal here. For me, what are remarkable about Nick's two love affairs are not their differences but their similarities. In "Love, a Queer Feeling," Berlant notes that one of "love's function[s] is to...bind subjects to a world in which they feel possible" (448). As Leo's love enables Nick to jump into life for the first time, in Wani's love aided by the "erotic rush" of cocaine, Nick discovers a world that is "doable and lovable": "They had kissed the first time they did coke together...Wani's mouth sour with wine, his tongue darting, his eyes timidly closed. Each time after that was a re-enactment of a thrilling beginning. Anything seemed possible—the world was not only doable, conquerable, but lovable" (225). Beauty does not discriminate. Beauty's distributing power is not limited to the beauty of certain races, classes, or moral principles. Catherine mocks Nick's penchant for looks: "You'd fall in love with someone just because they were beautiful, as you call it" (304). And she adds, "People are lovely because we love them, not the other way around" (Ibid.). Nick's love for Wani shows the truth of both of these positions. Even though Nick's initial fascination with Wani comes from the latter's "beautiful head and provoking little penis" (224) sighted at Worcester College, Oxford, Wani's beauty teaches Nick how to *not* condemn Wani's love of cocaine ("the other great affair in Wani's life" (303)) and pornography ("the real deep template for his life" (308)). At some point, Nick wonders to himself: "What really was his understanding with Wani? The pursuit of love seemed

to need the cultivation of indifference. The deep connection between them was so secret that at times it was hard to believe it existed” (212). Nick’s Love for Wani, as for Leo, has no bearing to grasping and mastering the lovely Other. Nick remains entirely desubjectivated in this relationship not only because he is called by Wani a “slut [who] takes my money” (339), but because he is selflessly and helplessly in awe of Wani’s beauty. Nick and Wani’s “deep connection” on the sole basis of beauty embodies an impossible Love without comprehension, judgment, or subjectivity: a “queer” and ethical love.

If Leo’s beauty illustrates the affinity between “aesthetical fairness” and “ethical fairness” by bringing Nick the joy of life, Wani’s beauty or, the end of it, achieves the same pedagogy by giving Nick a profound lesson on death. While one reviewer states that *The Line of Beauty* presents “the least emotional treatment of AIDS I have ever read” (Schellenberg), the drastic change in Wani, who now commands “attention by pity and respect as he once ha[s] by beauty and charm” (376), is horrifying and heartrending enough. Similarly, the following sentences are all the more sorrowful for their demonstration of the chasm between “the private marvel” of Wani’s beauty and the impending termination of that marvel: “Nick took a second or two to burn off his horror in the slower flame of his pity. Twice now he had come across Wani dozing and leaned over him not, as he used to, for the private marvel of the view, but to check that he was alive” (423). What is deeply moving in the quote, however, is the same action Nick takes—“leaning over him”—in order to check Wani’s pulse, which suggests to me the continuance of Nick’s love as well as the lasting power of beauty turned into an object of

care and pity. If Nick would lean over Wani so as to be immersed in his beauty, Nick still leans over him to nurse him and show a sign of loving sympathy. On the last page of the novel, the legacy of Wani's beauty metamorphoses Nick's candid horror at Wani's looming death into the "self-pity" and then "a larger pity" (438) for the world. To my puzzlement, a number of commentators of *The Line of Beauty* indicate the moralism of its ending: Julie Rivkin calls it "a bit of a morality play" (288), and James Wood notes that the novel's final section "rather rushes this business of ethical critique," proving to be "hasty and contrived" for "the extremity of its moral turn" (2004). No character seems to be morally punished at the end; Gerald remains as arrogant as ever, Rachel decides to stand up for her husband, Gerald's secretary tells Nick that she will not leave Gerald's side, and Catherine's depression is no better or worse than before Nick meets her. It is difficult to imagine that Hollinghurst intends to kill off his beautiful gay characters, Leo and Wani, with AIDS as a form of moral punishment. Lifted from James' writing, "the extremity of personal absence" (358) of Wani hits Nick hard. But through its effect of ultimate desubjection, Nick finds himself at last falling in love again with the "shockingly unconditional" (438) world, his frightened self shattered *and* solaced by its beauty.

Another group of the reviewers of Hollinghurst's novel rightly point out the element of the *Bildungsroman*—coming-of-age story—in this novel. An anonymous reviewer remarks that Nick "goes from a virginal 20-year-old to a wizened 24-year-old," and Michiko Kakutani uses the term *Bildungsroman* in order to comment on the ways that "innocence gives way to knowledge" (2004) in *The Line of Beauty*. Nonetheless, if

the *Bildungsroman* follows the protagonist's process of maturation in order to reintegrate him into society, Nick's *Bildungsroman* portrays a significantly different, "queer" narrative of maturation in which the matured protagonist is confronted not with a return to society as an adult citizen, but with a realization of mortality, including his own (Nick supposes that his HIV test might be positive this time).¹⁰ Displaying no expectation for the future, "a futurity Wani wasn't going to bother imagining" (383), what pervades the novel is the simile of the child, the word that appears as frequently as "beauty" and "beautiful" do in Hollinghurst's novel. Nick grins "like a teased child" (31), observes a party "like a sleepless child peering in at an adult world of bare shoulders, flushed faces, and cigar smoke" (68), is always "anxious not to be thought a child" (93), and speaks "like a painfully eager child" (271) among the Feddens. Also, he is viewed as "a child preppy" (133) by Leo, is given a "room for children" (198) on vacation, and is excited at the red Mazda, saying "a first car was a big day for a boy" (234). Despite his worldliness as a millionaire businessman, Wani is a lonely and confused boy who has to "play" with Nick; they are two "boys in a playground, and perhaps with the same eagerness and confusion" (225). Wani's hard-on is "boyishly steep and rigid" (226), and in threesomes he is treated as if he were "some beautiful pampered child" (339). Similarly, Leo is "quite small" (25) in figure, and "the deep divide" of his bottom is "as smooth as boy's" (35).

These examples and many more in the novel, as opposed to the "adulterous parents" and "adult gatherings" designating Gerald and his society, evidence that *The Line of Beauty* concludes with the deaths of children rather than the birth of new

citizenship. This radical breakup with futurity may well embody Edelman's notion of queerness which, in its refusal to endorse the Child in service of phantasmatic futurity, challenges "the universal empire of the Futurch" (2006; 822). While the deaths of gay characters in Hollinghurst's novel might signify a resistance to the "reproductive futurism" (2004; 21) implied in Gerald's political campaign and repetitive elections, the beautiful and queer children of this novel do not belong with Edelman's concept of "the Child as futurity's emblem" (2004; 31). Instead of Edelman's acute yet antagonistic perspective, Scarry's benevolent view on beauty's transtemporal movement helps the elucidation of Hollinghurst's "real" children, whose deaths leave behind, and anticipate, tangible marks of beauty. Scarry argues that beautiful things evoke a "forward" and "backward momentum" (46) at once. That is to say, beauty yields "the desire to bring new things into the world," such as "infants, sonnets, [and] drawings" (Ibid.).

Simultaneously, beautiful things urge us to "turn backward, for the beautiful faces and songs that lift us forward onto new ground keep calling out to us as well, inciting us to rediscover and recover them in whatever new things get made" (Ibid.). The first (and last) issue of *Ogee*, Nick and Wani's "whimsical coke-child" (428), would beautifully illustrate the forward spirit and the backward reflection beauty invokes. Inasmuch as *Ogee* is "the one beautiful thing [Wani] had managed to make out of his millions" and is "a masterpiece" in Nick's view, it is easy to see the generative movement of beauty.

The magazine is an apotheosis of Nick's desire for beauty, come into being via beauty's creative power. Meanwhile, what is in *Ogee* is thought-provoking and rich in criticism in spite of its "wonderland of luxury" (427). Its glossy spreads advertise "Bulgari, Dior,

BMW, [*Ogee's*] astounding godparents,” and its content includes articles by Nick and Anthony Burgess on “the Line of Beauty, illustrated with sumptuous photos of brooches, mirrors, lakes, the legs of rococo saints and sofas” (428). While *Ogee's* “luster [is] perfected and intense...the shine of marble and varnish,” Nick keenly observes: “It was the gleam of something that was over” (Ibid.). The “luster and shine” of this child will stay in “bedrooms and lavatories” (Ibid.) as a palpable proof of beauty, but its entanglement with capitalism, postmodern art, and drugs will cause us to recall its gorgeousness in a judicious, if not belittling, manner. In this sense, the premature death of *Ogee*, whose marvelous beauty inseparable from corruption resembles its producer, stands for the death of a beautiful child in the novel. Wani's death, neither a denial of futurity nor a waste of his beauty, helps Nick to look back upon the hedonistic pre-AIDS eighties, and to move forward to a new beautiful world in the post-AIDS era.

The Line of Beauty's Bildungsroman, then, proposes a new “queer” temporality insofar as the protagonist's growing up through his lovers' deaths defies “normative temporalities which privilege longevity over temporariness, permanence over contingency” (316). In “Forgetting Family,” Halberstam argues that “an authenticating notion of longevity” invested in kinship discourses renders all other relations, such as brief friendships and short affairs, “meaningless and superficial” (317). In order to imagine “other modes of relating, belonging, caring” (Ibid.) than family, Halberstam asserts the need of “alternative temporalities” and “new life narratives” (2005; 4) unscripted by conventional temporality represented in the familial life of inheritance and childrearing. If David Harvey notes that time is “organized according to the logic of

capital accumulation” (qtd. in Halberstam 2005; 7), the “queer time” coined by Halberstam denotes a new temporality that emerges “once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and longevity” (6). Nick’s short-lived relationships with Leo and Wani would appear to be indices of a reckless and immature lifestyle within the normative frame of a family-oriented temporality. Yet “the deep connection” that Nick shares with Leo and Wani regardless of longevity and commitment creates a new life—and death—narrative in a queer time.

In Halberstam’s words, “queer” means “nonnormative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity” (2005; 6). Hollinghurst’s novel is not only set in a queer temporality that finds hope and love in the time disappearing with AIDS, but also embraces a “queer” aesthetics in which beauty can never be normalized or standardized. In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate how each of the insolubly antinomic views on beauty can illuminate the different understandings of beauty presented in *The Line of Beauty*. Indeed, from sly, worrying, exotic, snobbish, corrupt, druggy, vulgar, and unsafe beauty, to idyllic, innocent, extraordinary, raw, charming, luxurious, and pornographic beauty, Hollinghurst’s novel throws a gala of lavish and astute adjectives and adverbs modifying the two core words, “beauty” and “beautiful.” Now, I would like to return to the questions I raise earlier in this chapter: What lies in the heart of Wani’s beauty? Is his beauty high or low, pure or mixed? Are we to be inevitably betrayed by his beauty? Far from answering these questions, *The Line of Beauty* ends with a somewhat sentimental sentence, an unsatisfactory one in terms of closure: “It wasn’t just this street corner but the fact of a

street corner at all that seemed, in the light of the moment, so beautiful” (438). If the reader feels confused and deceived by it, this confusion and sense of being betrayed reaffirms the quintessentially queer nature of beauty, crisscrossing disciplines and ideologies yet never staying inert. In this sense, the betrayal of beauty is an ethical revelation of beauty’s aliveness sustained by each loving beholder. Such is the queer power of beauty kindled in *The Line of Beauty*.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

While the novel has been a receptacle of “bad,” immoral desires represented in narratives of lying, adultery, treason, and other acts of betrayal, ethical literary criticism since Aristotle has concentrated on locating the universal Good in literary canons. Similarly, the resurgence of ethical literary criticism since the 1980s runs a risk of underwriting moral majoritarianism, judgmentalism, and elitism, thus resonating with what Alain Badiou condemns as “ethical ideologies” (2001; 58). In this sense, the current paradigm of ethical literary criticism cannot explain the popularity of the narratives of betrayal in postwar British novels in the context of the post-Empire, postcolonial, and post-women’s and gay liberation movement. This dissertation argues that some acts of betrayal as portrayed by contemporary British writers embody an ethical desire, insofar as they undertake an ethical rebellion against the status quo guarded by the normative Good. In taking issue with the simplistic good and bad binary as mandated by late capitalist, neo-imperialist, and heteronormative society, this dissertation proposes an ethic of betrayal, whose ethical value lies in its constant search of “the better” beyond good and bad.

The first full chapter, “An Ethical Adultery: Hanif Kureishi’s *Intimacy*,” begins with a discussion of classic novels of adultery in order to show the tenacious authority of monogamy in representing adult intimacy in Western literature. Kureishi’s novel creates a new genesis of the novel of infidelity, inasmuch as it breaks away from this old

circular binary of marriage and adultery. Jay, a middle-aged writer resembling Kureishi, walks out on monogamy not in order to commit to another marriage but to dwell in the realm of flirtation, what I call the narrative of “singledom” as opposed to the monolithic narrative of “coupledom.” In disrupting the symbiosis of monogamy and infidelity, and sanctioning betrayal as moving on for the better, Jay’s unfaithfulness connotes an ethical desire that reimagines intimacies uninflected by the monogamy/infidelity dyad.

The next chapter is titled “Treason in Salman Rushdie’s *Fury*.” If prior criticism on Rushdie celebrates the synergetic tension between “the *trans* and the *post*,” valorizing mobility, multiplicity, and newness, and the desire for “*re*,” return and restoration, both cosmopolitan liberty and ethnic loyalty remain undesirable in *Fury*. Mistakenly, the novel has been dismissed as representing an elitist American cosmopolitanism due to its seeming lack of detached critical positioning. This chapter argues that *Fury*, rather than mediating between migrant and national, illustrates the extent to which ideologies of both cosmopolitanism and nationalism are saturated with media-frenzied and celebrity-obsessed metropolitan cultural politics. In *Fury*, a novel about Manhattan’s celebrity culture, both cosmopolitanism and nationalism are turned into political commodities by the global culture of celebrification based on the American market. In this sense, *Fury*’s rejection of allegiance to both cosmopolitanism and nationalism signifies an ethical rebellion, an act of treason against the cultural Empire of America, abandoning any commodified “isms.”

In Chapter IV, I look at Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting* and its long-awaited sequel *Porno* under the title of “Ripping Off.” A novel about drug junkies in 1980s Edinburgh,

Trainspotting concludes with Mark Renton's ripping off his best mates' shares in the drug scheme and his renouncing of his working-class Scottish nationality in favor of Amsterdam's transnational consumerism. If Renton's ripping off appears to reiterate the process whereby national and class boundaries are "deterritorialized" only to be "reterritorialized" within global capitalism, this chapter argues that Renton's negation of life—"Ah choose no tae choose life"—interrupts this cycle of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. His death wish embodies the Lacanian sense of ethical desire, drug-induced *jouissance* uncontained by the capitalist economy. To leave his mates behind affirms Renton's will to life after he has returned from near-death drug experiences, and presages the "better" life of an exile who deterritorializes the plan(e) of capitalism. The latter half of the chapter proposes that at the turn of the third millennium, *Porno* offers a timely update to *Trainspotting*'s anti-capitalist project by tackling the ethos of capitalism. While Sick Boy repeats that "it's not about the money, it's about the betrayal" to Renton, who returns after nine years to produce a pornographic film, Sick Boy's advocacy of friendship commanding total trust facilitates the global market's exploitation disguised in friendly exchange. In having Renton rip off Sick Boy and shatter his creed in business "ethics," which glorifies mutual trust and friendly transaction, *Porno* satirizes the "trustworthiness" of trust in capitalism.

The last full chapter, "Betrayed by Beauty," contemplates death—the ultimate betrayal of life and beauty—in Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty*. In this novel, Hollinghurst describes a treacherous world where switching lovers or one's aesthetic and political tastes is far from rare in the 1980's hedonistic gay coterie and flashy art culture

fostered by Thatcher's entrepreneurship. This chapter argues that *The Line of Beauty* updates the link between aesthetics and ethics in postcolonial and post-AIDS contexts. This novel adds "the dip and swell" of the Lebanese-English gay lover's naked back, which is destined for death by AIDS, to Hogarth's "line of beauty," a decorative double-curve in eighteenth-century British moral painting that ties up austere beauty with moral absolutes. In depicting without judgment beautiful, dark-skinned, dying homosexual bodies, Hollinghurst's novel "fleshes out" the traditional sphere of aesthetics that denies the low and impure pleasures frequently paired with gay sex.

In *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, Derrida compellingly argues that true forgiveness lies in "forgiving the unforgivable" (vii), as *xenia*, the Greek word for "hospitality," assumes a friendship not only with a friend but also for an enemy. This dissertation proposes an ethic of forgiveness as a post-betrayal possibility by arguing that Renton and Begbie's oddly touching love-hate relationship after Renton's betrayal in *Porno*—friendship beyond the political distinction between friend and enemy—embodies this Derridean forgiveness.

NOTES

Chapter I

1. Michael Eskin argues that *New Literary History*'s pioneering special issue, "Literature and/as Moral Philosophy," made the revival of ethical literary criticism public in 1983 (557).

2. For starters, see Wayne C. Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (1988); Tobin Siebers, *The Ethics of Criticism* (1988); Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (1990); Frank Palmer, *Literature and Moral Understanding* (1992); David Parker, *Ethics, Theory and the Novel* (1995); Jane Adamson, *Renegotiating Ethics in Literature, Philosophy, and Theory* (1998); and Todd Davis and Kenneth Womack, *Mapping the Ethical Turn: A Reader in Ethics, Culture, and Literary Theory* (2001). Even though his deconstructionist approach is markedly different from the aforementioned studies, J. Hillis Miller's *The Ethics of Reading: Kant, De Man, Eliot, Trollope, James, and Benjamin* (1989) remains a groundbreaking monograph in this field. For an exceptional branch of thought in moral philosophy that does not fit into this categorization—but that is still perspicacious—read Simon Blackburn's *Being Good* (2002).

3. For works of literary criticism inspired by Lévinas, see Adam Zachary Newton, *Narrative Ethics* (1997); Eaglestone, *Ethical Criticism: Reading after Lévinas* (1998); and Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Lévinas and Derrida* (1992);

1999). Interestingly, Geoffrey Galt Harpham's two books, *Getting It Right: Language, Literature, and Ethics* (1992) and *Shadows of Ethics: Criticism and the Just Society* (1999), evidence a general transition of interest of the ethical literary critic in the nineties. If the former book focuses on restoring the significance of "the other" in examining literature, the latter book looks to mediate two arguments that "literature is overshadowed by the philosophical inquiry into the conditions of the good society, the good person, and the good life" and that "literature...make[s] a home for itself in the dark, disorderly, and fertile spaces unilluminated by the klieg lights of ethics" (ix).

4. A peer-reviewed journal entitled, *Journal of Happiness Studies: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Subjective Well-Being*, exemplifies one of many publications on happiness studies.

5. Jane Austen, Joseph Conrad, Herman Melville, and Mark Twain are some of the favorites among ethical literary critics, but Henry James proves to be the absolute favorite of all, discussed exhaustively by Booth, Diamond, Newton, Nussbaum, and J. Hillis Miller.

6. For recent studies connecting ethics and aesthetics, see my last chapter. For a subject headings search keyword, "globalization—moral and ethical aspects," LibCat at Evans Library pulls up fifty-two citations, all published since 2000. The following appear to be most helpful: Mark Rupert, *Ideologies of Globalization: Contending Visions of a New World Order* (2000); Ken Booth et al. ed., *How Might We Live?: Global Ethics in a New Century* (2001); Peter Singer, *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* (2002); John Dunning ed., *Making Globalization Good: the Moral*

Challenges of Global Capitalism (2003); Zygmunt Bauman, *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?* (2008); and M. S. Ronald Commers et al. ed., *Ethics in an Era of Globalization* (2008). It is difficult—not to mention unfruitful—to pin down certain writings of Derrida as representative of his “political” or “ethical” turn in the 1990s. While Derrida’s book-length publications of the nineties show his intensified interests in justice, responsibility, and friendship, his thoughts more directly concerning human rights and global terrorism appear in later essays, such as “Ethics and Politics Today” and “Globalization, Peace, and Cosmopolitanism.”

7. For rare examples, see Jeffrey Karnicky, *Contemporary Fiction and the Ethics of Modern Culture* (2007) and Barbara Arizti et al. ed., *On the Turn: The Ethics of Fiction in Contemporary Narrative in English* (2007).

8. Exceptions are: Elizabeth Hardwick, *Seduction and Betrayal: Women and Literature* (2001); Leslie Bow, *Betrayal and Other Acts of Subversion: Feminism, Sexual Politics, Asian American Women’s Literature* (2001); Jeff Abernathy, *To Hell and Back: Race and Betrayal in the Southern Novel* (2003); and Chrystal Parikh, *An Ethics of Betrayal: the Politics of Otherness in Emergent US Literatures and Culture* (2009).

Interestingly, distinguished from the long tradition of modern humanism in Anglophone literary criticism, some of the modern French writers and their explorations of “wicked” elements in literature have been recognized as pushing for a new kind of morality. In such works as *Literature and Evil* and *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, Georges Bataille argues that death, evil, and eroticism are not only set within the same

configuration but are also coterminous with life. The Marquis de Sade's philosophy-laden pornographic novels, including *Juliette*, *Incest*, and *Betrayal*, are placed in diametrical opposition to the moral Law and have been widely commented from an ethical perspective. Critical works by and on these French writers present groundwork for an Anglophone "post-moral" literary criticism but also show the need to formulate one concentrated in contemporary fiction. For work on Sade by major theorists, see Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, "*Juliette* or Enlightenment and Morality" (1947); Susan Sontag, "The Pornographic Imagination" (1966); Lacan, "Kant with Sade" (1966); Roland Barthes, *Sade/Fourier/Loyola* (1971); and Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* (1979).

9. "The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory" is the title of a panel in the MLA convention in 2005, and the panelists' positions can be found in the "Forum: Conference Debates" section of *PMLA* 121.3 (2006): 819-28. To do justice to the diverse definitions of queer theory, it should be noted that the antisocial position is not prevalent within the field. For example, see John Brenkman's essay that tackles Edelman's position. For other work interweaving ethics and queer theory, see Colleen Lamos's and Berlant and Warner's essays.

10. Richard Bradford's *The Novel Now: Contemporary British Fiction* and Philip Tew's *The Contemporary British Novel* both start with mid-1970s literature.

11. Reminiscent of moral philosophers, Burgess justifies his creation of "evil" characters in his introduction to *A Clockwork Orange*: "Evil has to exist along with

good, in order that moral choice may operate” (ix). Without “the possibilities of moral transformation,” Burgess argues, there is “not much point in writing a novel” (viii).

12. To juxtapose the “bad boy” novelists of my dissertation and Thatcher risks reinforcing the hip masculinity versus restrained maternal division, what Susan Fraiman dubs the “antimaternal coolness” of bad boys and “the uncool mother” (xii). Fraiman argues that this masculinist mode of “coolness” presupposes antagonism to an “unhip” figure of the mother and, more often than not, the feminine, thus enhancing conventional views of gender. What intrigues me is the ways that the once-bad boy writers cope in the post-Thatcher era when, in a sense, to keep their “coolness” without the opposing Mother becomes difficult. For a study of postwar British masculinities, see Andrew Spicer’s *Typical Men*.

Chapter II

1. For the theme of triangulation in literature, see: Rene Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure* ([1965] 1976); and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* ([1985] 1992). In Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Algernon says, “Three’s company and two’s none.” In *Monogamy*, adapting this, Phillips notes, “Two’s company, but three’s a couple” (110). Kipnis mentions Harold Pinter’s *Betrayal* as a prime example of triangulation in *Against Love*.

2. For early works on female adultery, see Judith Armstrong, *The Novel of Adultery* (1976) and Elizabeth Hardwick, *Seduction and Betrayal: Women and*

Literature (1974; 2001). A recent flood of publications on female adultery—especially from legal perspectives—includes: Laura Korobkin, *Criminal Conversations: Sentimentality and Nineteenth-Century Legal Stories of Adultery* (1998); Barbara Leckie, *Culture and Adultery: The Novel, the Newspaper, and the Law, 1857-1914* (1999); Bill Overton, *Fictions of Female Adultery, 1684-1890: Theories and Circumtexts* (2002); Maria R. Rippon *Judgment and Justification in the Nineteenth-Century Novel of Adultery* (2002); and Elizabeth Amann, *Importing Madame Bovary: The Politics of Adultery* (2006). For a comprehensive study of adultery in the 1980s, see Annette Lawson's *Adultery: An Analysis of Love and Betrayal* (1988).

3. Overton, Korobkin, and Amann each have a separate chapter that discusses Tanner's book, or quote extensively from Tanner and de Rougemont.

4. Another good example of the marriage system's incorporation of the realm of intimacy, the first chapter entitled "Love and Intimacy" of *Heterosexuality*—a 600-page medical report on every aspect of heterosex—opens with a quote from Shakespeare's sonnet, "Let me not to the marriage of true minds." While three M.D.-authors' literary taste is pleasant, what follows this sonnet about everlasting love is their guidelines how to "maintain" love and intimacy, using eight suggestions. The first one is "First and foremost, don't expect perfection," and the last one is "Maintaining love isn't automatic."

5. Some of the titles are: Christopher Lane's *The Burdens of Intimacy*, Lauren Berlant's (ed.) *Intimacy*, Jacques-Alain Miller's "Extimacy," Bersani and Phillips' *Intimacies*, and Tim Dean's *Unlimited Intimacy*.

6. See Jonathan Ned Katz's *The Invention of Heterosexuality* ([1995] 2007); Jeffrey Weeks, ed. *Sexual Cultures: Community, Values and Intimacy* (1996); Chrys Ingraham's *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture* ([1999] 2008); Ingraham, ed. *Thinking Straight: The Power, Promise, and Paradox of Heterosexuality* (2004); and Ingraham, ed. *Heterosexuality: A Reader* (2008).

7. In Braine's *Room at the Top*, Joe has an affair with Alice, an older woman separated but not divorced from her husband, while at the same time he entices and impregnates Susan, the daughter of the owner of the company where he works. Alice kills herself and Joe, a bit shocked yet without hesitation, marries Susan. In Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Arthur has affairs with two sisters, one married the other engaged. But, at the end, he decides to marry Doreen. Arthur's last words, although they make a valid social criticism, exhibit less resolution to change society than acceptance of it, with a masculinist bravado:

Slung into khaki at eighteen, and when they let you out, you sweat again in a factory, grabbing for an extra pint, doing women at weekend and getting to know whose husbands are on the night-shift, working with rotten guts and an aching spine, and nothing for it but money to drag you back there every Monday morning... Well, it's a good life and a good world, all said and done, if you don't weaken. (239)

8. Julian Barnes' *Before She Met Me* (1992) and *Love etc.* (2002), and Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love* (1998) all revisit the theme of triangulation inherent in marriage. These novels illustrate, respectively, how easily marriage can go awry with a hint of triangulation between a happily married couple and the men "before she met me"; and the couple's best friend; and the psychopathic gay stalker in McEwan's novel. I am also referring to the extramarital affairs of Samad Iqbal and Poppy Burt-Jones in

Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), of Howard Belsey and Victoria Kipps in Smith's *On Beauty*, and of Malik Solanka and Neela Mahendra in Rushdie's *Fury* (2001). Three of these affairs end up with the death of an adulterer.

Rare exceptions to this master plot of marriage are Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body* (1994), in which marriage is called "a plate-glass window just begging for a brick [for its] self-exhibition, self-satisfaction, [and] smarminess" (13), and Patrick Marber's *Closer* (1997), where a vitriolic depiction of the "fearsome intimacy" (Ebert) between four deceptive lovers has no room for marriage. Despite their challenge to marriage, both of these works kill off their heroines at the end.

9. Lacan distinguishes between the Real, the realm of the aggressive desire called *jouissance* that is lost as we acquire language and grow into the symbolic; the Symbolic, the realm of the social maintained by the symbolic Law; and the Imaginary, what we falsely imagine to be the irrevocable Real.

10. See Bataille's *Literature and Evil* and *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*; Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse*; and Badiou's *Handbook of Inaesthetics*.

11. See Leslie Bow, *Betrayal and Other Acts of Subversion: Feminism, Sexual Politics, Asian American Women's Literature*; and Jeff Abernathy, *To Hell and Back: Race and Betrayal in the Southern Novel*.

12. Jay's relationship with his two sons is worth mentioning because it provides another example of "searingly honest" descriptions in *Intimacy*. Jay understands his Mother's old words that "children stop you living...It's them or you" (56). When he was tired, he would put brandy in his baby son's milk (86), showing that he is a horrible

father. His children treat him “as if he is a butler” (9), but for all this Jay knows that even if he hates his own father and his children sometimes, “you don’t stop loving someone just because you hate them” (82). The passage in which Jay holds his younger son and looks at him as if he looks at himself is remarkably reminiscent of Emmanuel Lévinas’ notion of paternity: “Paternity is not a sympathy through which I can put myself in the son’s place. It is through my being, not through sympathy, that I am my son” (52). Jay states: “He is me; I am him; both of us part of one another, but separate in the world. For now it is myself I am carrying in my arms” (90). For Levinas, an ethical relation is not based on proximity or on sympathy. Jay’s imperative to leave despite his love for his sons, whose “affectionate words and little voice are God’s breath to [him]” (92), embodies a notion of ethical paternity that does not require the father and children to be close and sympathetic to each other in order to be ethically obligated to each other.

13. In his novel *The Immoralist*, André Gide calls honesty “restriction, convention, timidity” (146). To borrow from Marcel Proust, a “perfect lie” is “one of the few things in the world that can open windows for us on to what is new and unknown” (qtd. in Sedgwick 1990; 67).

14. Kipnis laments that love, due to its very amorphousness and malleability, has been forged into whatever serves society, which makes the loss of love the “most devastating fear afflicting the modern individual” (93). In *Intimacy*, Jay declares that “love is dark work” that gets “your hands dirty” (71). But Jay still states that “nothing is as fascinating as love, unfortunately” (Ibid.), thereby emphasizing the role of mischievous desire, rather than that of a selfless devotion to the other, in defining love.

In his thoroughly engaging and perceptive study, *Lust*, Simon Blackburn polarizes ennobling and lasting love, and sneaky and cloying lust, so as to reclaim lust as an essential, if not applauded, virtue. Blackburn's passage is worthy of quoting in length:

Love receives the world's applause. Lust is furtive, ashamed, and embarrassed. Love pursues the good of the other, with self-control, concern, reason, and patience. Lust pursues its own gratification, headlong, impatient of any control, immune to reason. Love thrives on candlelight and conversation. Lust is equally happy in a doorway or a taxi, and its conversation is made of animal grunts and cries. Love is individual: there is only the unique Other, the one doted upon, the single star around whom the lover revolves. Lust takes what comes. Lovers gaze into each others' eyes. Lust looks sideways, inventing deceits and stratagems and seductions, sizing up opportunities. Love grows with knowledge and time, courtship, truth, and trust. Lust is a trail of clothing in the hallway, the collision of two football packs. Love lasts, lust cloy. (2)

Chapter III

1. In a strikingly similar manner to Kumar's, Daniel Mendelsohn observes that Solanka's "cynical satire is, if anything, symptomatic of the problems he's lampooning," and Tonkin notes that the novel "mimics our current condition of frantic over-stimulation as much as it explains it" (2001). For hostile reviews of Rushdie's novel, see the reviews of Brooke Allen, Gail Caldwell, Jason Cowley, Richard Eder, David Gates, Brad Hooper, Michiko Kakutani (2001), and Sybil Steinberg. For relatively generous reviews, read those of Claudia Rosett, Merle Rubin, Tonkin, and John Sutherland.

2. In "Postethnicity and Postcommunism," Mita Banerjee argues that Rushdie's *Fury* promotes a "new kind of cultural exoticism" (309) disguised as hybridity, thus merely showing postcolonial studies' return to conservatism. Banerjee calls "the brave new world of postcolonial studies" "the brave old world of the Western mainstream"

(320), and dubs Rushdie “the Tony Blair of postcolonial studies” (321). For another postcolonial reading of Rushdie’s novel, see Rodney Stephens’ “American Culture Meets Post-Colonial Insight: Visions of the United States in Salman Rushdie’s *Fury*.”

3. See Gavin Keulks’ “New York, Los Angeles, and Other Toxicities: Revisiting Postmodernism in Salman Rushdie’s *Fury* and *Shalimar the Clown*,” and Justyna Deszcz’ “*Solaris*, America, Disneyworld and Cyberspace: Salman Rushdie’s Fairy-Tale Utopianism in *Fury*” for other postmodern readings of Rushdie’s novel. Despite his perceptive reading of *Fury*, Keulks concludes that the novel is an “illuminating, instructive failure” (152).

4. Timothy Brennan’s writing represents the view of cosmopolitanism as a worldwide Americanization. Brennan coined the term, “convenient cosmopolitanism,” in order to condemn “Third-World” intellectuals’ political non-commitment. See his *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (1987) and *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation* (1989). See Cecile Leonard’s “Mapping Global Contexts in Salman Rushdie’s *Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Fury*” for another cosmopolitan reading of *Fury*.

5. In addition to these traditions of cosmopolitanism of the Stoics and Kant, Robert Fine and Robin Cohen discuss “[Hanna] Arendt’s Moment” and “[Martha] Nussbaum’s Moment” as the third and the fourth of their “Four Cosmopolitan Moments.” See Fine and Cohen’s chapter of the same title.

6. For an essential study of the problematic of American multiculturalism, see David Hollinger’s *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (1995).

7. Some of the recent studies of cosmopolitanism not elsewhere referred to in this chapter include: Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs* (2000); Carol Breckenridge, Homi Bhabha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Sheldon Pollock, eds. *Cosmopolitanism* (2002); Stephen Vertovec and Robin Cohen, eds. *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice* (2002); Seyla Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism* (2006); and Robert Fine, *Cosmopolitanism* (2007).

8. I am not the first in detecting the Nietzschean philosophy in *Fury*. In “Beyond Good and Evil? Ethics and Aesthetics in Rushdie’s *Fury*,” Chitra Sankaran finds Rushdie’s novel “remarkably akin to Nietzsche” insofar as the novel paints “a world of relentless duality of good versus evil, constantly at odds with each other” (98).

9. Daniel Mendelsohn notes that given Rushdie’s “slide into Personality-hood lately,” *Fury* makes a case of “protesting too much.” Likewise, Kumar dismisses Solanka as the personification of Rushdie’s “real theme,” which is “success,” “stardom,” and “self-glorification.” Although Tonkin defends the novelist by saying that it is Rushdie’s “pomposity and arrogance” (2001) that saved his creative life under the *fatwa*, it is agreed upon that unlike the “master pickler” of *The Satanic Verses*, Solanka exhibits too much of Rushdie’s life as a celebrity, serving *Fury* as a “masala” in which “one can still taste too much raw individual ingredients” (Tandon).

10. Some of the article and magazine titles are: “And the Prize for Pomposity, Titanic Conceit and Turgid Novels Goes to...; As Salman Rushdie is Tipped to Win the Booker Again” (Wilson 2008); “And Good Riddance, Rushdie (You Have Cost Us GBP 10M and You Can’t Even Say Thank you); As the *Satanic Verses* Author Spurns

‘Backbiting, Incestuous’ Britain” (Hudson 2000). A Lexis Nexis academic database search (the US and world major publication in English, including newspaper, magazines, journals, and newsletters) under the search term “Salman Rushdie” pulled up approximately 1,000 entries. Among them, the titles published since 2000 deal with Rushdie’s private life (“fab” lifestyles involving the author’s plenteous womanizing and partying, winner of “the Looker Prize”) more than focusing on his writing. For instance, Shinan Govani’s “Lost in Distraction; Salman Rushdie’s Take on Scarlett Was the Talk of His Recent Visit” talks about Rushdie’s recent appearance in Scarlet Johanson’s music video. Waqar Ahmed’s “Letter: What Message in Making Rushdie a Sir?” in *Birmingham Post* complains about Rushdie’s newly-gained knighthood in 2007.

For an essay focusing on Rushdie’s status as literary celebrity, see Wenche Ommundsen’s “From the Altar to the Market-Place and Back Again: Understanding Literary Celebrity” (2007). Ommundsen’s essay traces the ways in which Rushdie and Padma Lakshmi’s wedding in Manhattan has helped the marketing of his literary career.

11. Rushdie’s metaphor of the Galileo moment, his emphasis on the need to pursue what he believes to be true fearlessly in front of the terrifying enemy, appears to be based on the author’s own experience of a Galilean recantation (and the recantation of that very recantation) in the whirlwind of the *fatwa*. In a short document entitled “Why I Have Embraced Islam” (1990), Rushdie makes the first recantation by claiming that he accepts Muhammad and that he will “not authorize any new translations of [*The Satanic Verses*] and would block the publication of the much awaited paperback edition of [the same novel]” (Al-Azm 57). The next year, at a lecture at Columbia University, Rushdie

recants (for the second time) his “surrender” in “Why I Have Embraced Islam,” professing that “I have never disowned my book, nor regretted writing it,” and “I was wrong to have given way on this point” (qtd. in Al-Azm 59). Al-Azm notes that if “Rushdie’s first recantation was as insincere, coerced and utilitarian as Galileo’s,” Rushdie’s “recantation of the recantation” demonstrates his surviving of “the terror of the ‘fatwa’” as well as his courage in never ceasing to “write satirically, critically and creatively, particularly about the sacred” (64) ever since.

12. Since this chapter’s interest is in elucidating Rushdie’s use of betrayal in *Fury* as an ethical-critical strategy against the American empire, I have avoided discussing in details the female characters of this novel and the questions they bring about. As is the case with many of Rushdie’s earlier work, there are multiple female characters who *seem* to play major roles in *Fury* (for instance, Mila, Neela, and Eleanor as incarnations of the three *Furies* of Solanka’s life), but all of them vanish or are destroyed at some point. The following words are Solanka’s only substantial apology for his loss of interest in marriage, and reveal his half romantic, half masculinist attitude toward women:

This is what he looked for in women: to be overpowered, outmatched. This Gangetic, Mississippian inexorability, whose dwindling, he sadly knew, was what had gone wrong in his marriage. Overwhelming doesn’t last forever. No matter how astonishing the initial contact, in the end the beloved astonished us less. She merely whelms and, even further down the road, underwhelms. But to give up on his need for excess, for the immense thing, the thing that made him feel like a surfer in the snow, riding the crest of an avalanche’s leading edge! To say good-bye to that need would also be to accept that he was, in the matter of desire, agreeing to be dead. (179)

In an interview with Jonathan Noakes in 2002, Rushdie clarifies his view on love, its instability and its disinterest in duration suggestive of *Fury*'s representation of women and love. See page 32 of the interview in Margaret Reynolds and Noakes, eds. *Salman Rushdie: The Essential Guide*.

13. Other commentaries on *Fury*'s ending worth mentioning would be Barbara Hoffert's and Tandon's. Hoffert finds the coda less "poignant" than "comic." Tandon finds it interesting that Rushdie uses "another imperiled father-son reconciliation" for the finale of *Fury*. The moment Solanka feels his fury evaporated by Neela's love, he tells her a story that he has kept a secret since he was a ten-year-old boy in Bombay; the story relates that Solanka's stepfather dressed him up as a girl and touched him until their neighbor, Mr. Venkat, stopped it permanently. Although the traumatizing story of childhood sexual abuse should be conducive to the main plot of the novel, this story comes and goes very quickly, and ends up as one of many fleeting episodes of the novel. This is why I focus more on Asmaan's name, meaning "sky," than on his barely existent relationship with his father in interpreting the coda.

Chapter V

1. Inasmuch as this chapter aims to sever the old link between goodness and beauty since Plato, represented by his phrase "the good is the beautiful," I start with post-Kantian theories of aesthetics. In his influential monograph, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*, Andrew Bowie argues that it is Kant's aesthetics that not only revived Plato's thoughts about "beauty as the symbol of the good" but for

the first time delved into the ways aesthetics is “connected to the emergence of subjectivity” (2). The new focus on subjectivity of Kant’s aesthetics, his belief that “the only certainty philosophy can provide is grounded in ourselves, not in something outside ourselves” (Ibid.), shows that with the onset of modernity, the realm of aesthetics cannot be understood in purely moral terms any longer but engage with new modern ideologies, such as individualism (following the death of God), capitalism, and science. Likewise, Marcia Eaton notes that contemporary “consequentialist” theories of ethics in which aesthetic value is explained as deriving from moral values do not claim that “all art has a moral function or that there is an inevitable connection between beauty and virtue” (130). Rather, they claim that some art can help “produce people who are likely to follow moral rules or strive to produce favorable results” by affecting “the way we look at the world” (131).

2. For a volume that announces the “return of the exile”—the return of aesthetic discourses in academia, see Pamela R. Matthews and David McWhirter, eds., *Aesthetic Subjects*. For other general studies demonstrating renewed interests in aesthetics, see Isobel Armstrong, *The Radical Aesthetic* and Wolfgang Iser, *Undoing Aesthetics*.

3. For a thorough and comprehensive study on literal as well as metaphoric taste, see Denis Gigante’s *Taste: A Literary History*.

4. See William Hogarth’s *The Analysis of Beauty*.

5. For studies that connect ethics and aesthetics, see Jerrold Levinson, ed. *Aesthetics and Ethics: Essays at the Intersection* and Dorota Glowacka and Stephen Boos, eds. *Between Ethics and Aesthetics: Crossing the Boundaries*.

6. In “The Labor Theory of Beauty: Aesthetics Subjects, Blind Justice,” Douglas Mao interprets Scarry’s linking of beauty and justice as reflecting the late 1990s “public discourse” in the United States that is “marked by a convergence between unprecedentedly explicit condemnation of inequalities...and unprecedentedly relentless broadcasting of the benefits that accrue to the physically beautiful” (191).

7. Tellingly, this view of commentators corresponds to a conventional—and too easy—reading of James as well, shown in the criticism of Gilbert Osmond’s connoisseurship in *The Portrait of a Lady*, for instance.

8. To do justice to James, it should be noted that many critics, including McWhirter, have argued that James “deconstructs” mastery in his work for all the “guest” roles he has often been cast in, both in reality and criticism of his writing.

9. The new law of “queer” hospitality, whose center is moved away from the house ruled by the master to an outside of the house enjoyed by the guest, can be understood in conjunction with Barthes’ notion of “text.” In “From Work to Text,” Barthes argues that in “text,” the author, the Father of the text, is replaced by the writer as a guest in his text. In this sense, my argument has little relation to a postmodern queer reading of the novel which views Nick/Hollinghurst as both outsider and insider crossing over the mainstream and gay novel division. See Kaye Mitchell’s essay, “Alan Hollinghurst and Homosexual Identity,” for this type of stereotypical queer reading.

10. I understand that a broad understanding of the term *Bildungsroman* might include a wide range of narratives that include moral development and the realization of mortality, from Greek tragedy to the Victorian novel. But my use of the term is confined

to a certain tradition of the *Bildungsroman* that arose during the German Enlightenment in the turn of the nineteenth century, felicitously exemplified by Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*.

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VITA

Soo Yeon Kim received her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degree, both in English Language and Literature, from Seoul National University, South Korea, in 1999 and 2001 respectively. Kim earned her Ph.D. in English from Texas A&M University, College Station, in May 2010.

Kim's research interests include twentieth and twenty-first century British literature, post-1945 British cinema, contemporary fiction, and postcolonial world literature. Kim's writing has appeared in *Doris Lessing Studies* (2007), the *Greenwood Encyclopedia of Asian American Literature* (2008), *Reconstruction: Studies in Contemporary Culture* (2009), *Detective Fiction in a Postcolonial and Transnational World* (Ashgate Publishing, 2009), and *South Central Review* (2009).

Kim may be reached at the Department of English, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843. Kim's email address is sooykim@tamu.edu.